

THE POMPS OF SATAN

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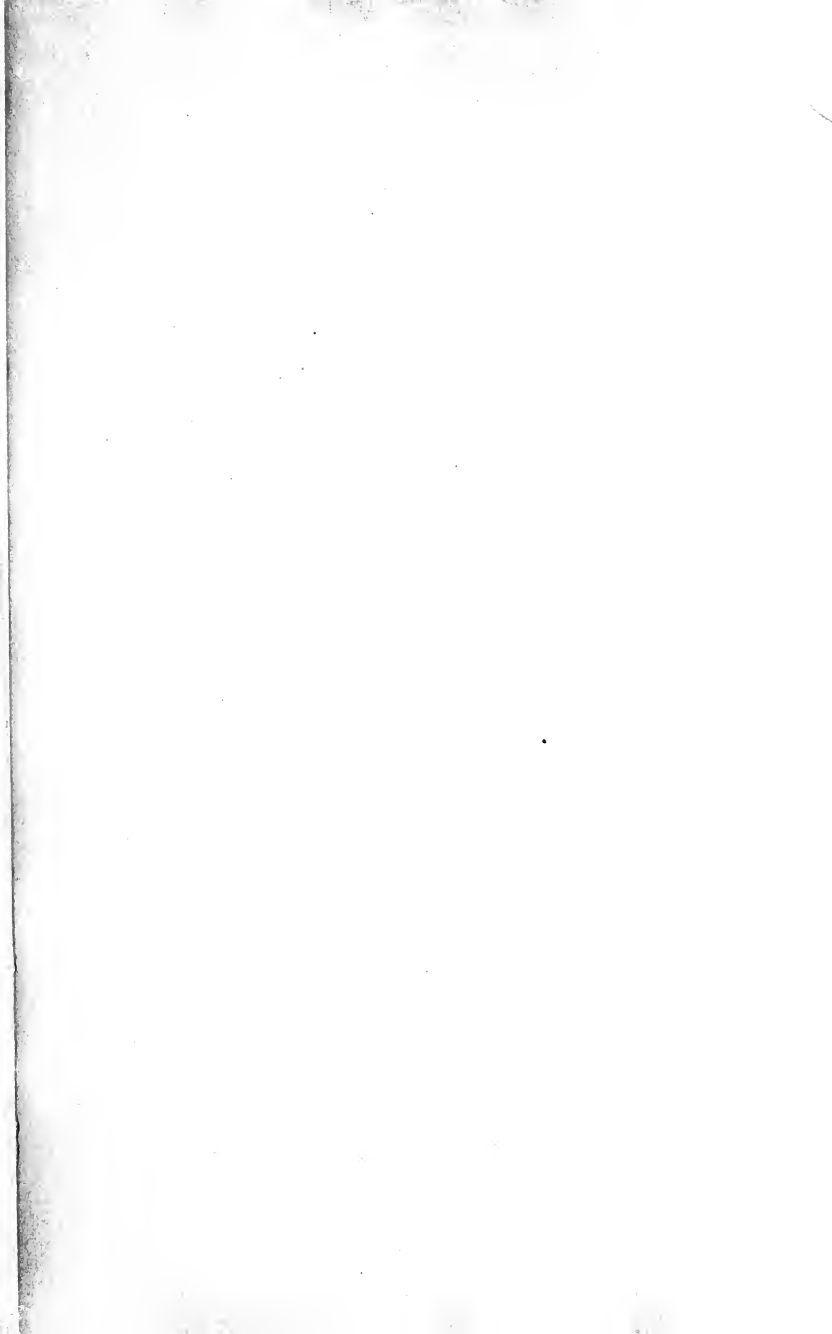
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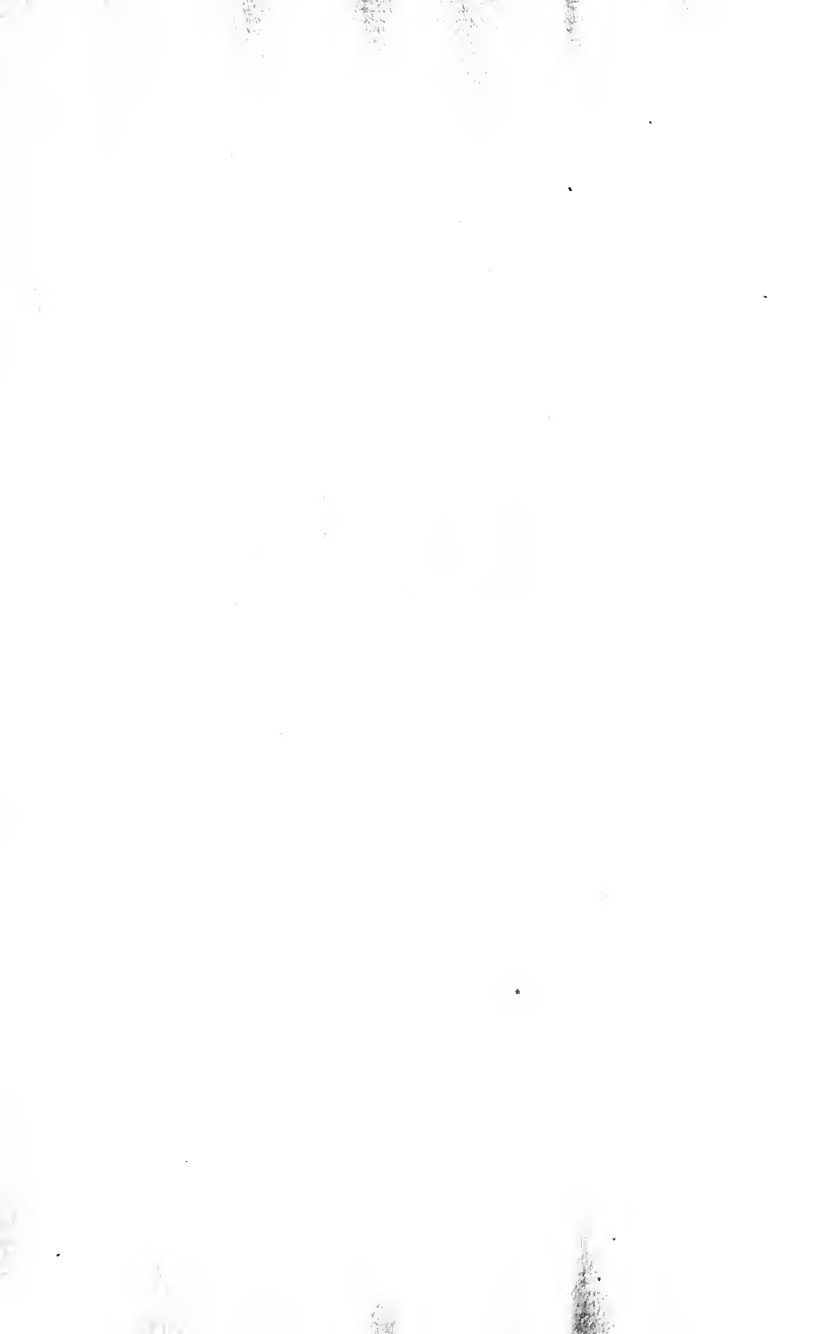
THE PACE THAT KILLS

THE PHILOSOPHY OF DISENCHANTMENT

THE ANATOMY OF NEGATION

PURPLE AND FINE WOMEN

THE POMPS OF SATAN



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By
EDGAR SALTUS

“Ce livre se mogre de vous.”—MALHERBE



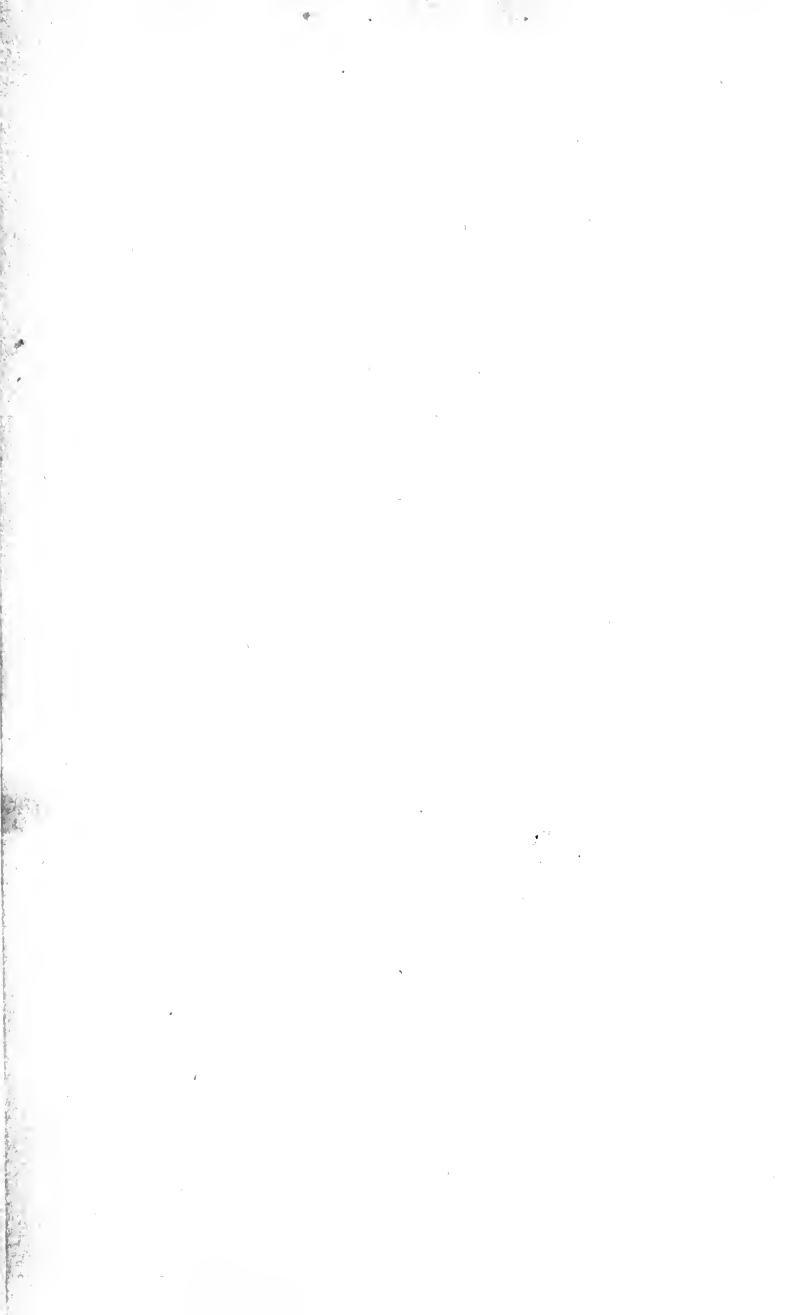
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THE POMPS OF SATAN

I

VANITY SQUARE

“WE authors,” Disraeli is rumoured to have remarked in the course of a conversation with V. R.; and though the plural was singular, it is rumoured, too, that with it he flattered her basely. It is rumoured also that nothing ever flattered her more except when he made her Empress of India. These rumours are repeated for what they are worth. One of them relates to an incident that occurred a long time ago, and may not have occurred at all. Even so, and even otherwise a point remains. Titles appeal to women. They are highly decorative, very becoming, serviceable in more ways than one. They may not perhaps lessen the length of the ears, but the attendant tiaras conceal it. *C'est déjà beaucoup*. The taste is not limited to women either. There are men who would not know how to get along without them. They

secure credit from tradesmen and attention from heiresses. What more could the heart desire? In the circumstances a bill submitted to the Italian Parliament merits consideration.

The measure provides that in exchange for coin titles may be transmuted. After all, why not? The difference between mister and mon-seigneur is not of a nature to weigh with a sturdy American, but in New York it tickles the girls. Every one of them loves a lord, though it is not every one of them who has a lord to love.

The bill, then, is sufficiently praiseworthy. What it lacks is utility. Since the beginning of years and the beginning of things titles have been purchasable in Italy. They could be had in the Rome of the Cæsars as well as in the Rome of the Saints. There are at this minute a hundred princes who for a hundred dollars are not only able but anxious to supply them. The process, legally catalogued as adoption, has been performed again and again. For that matter a New York woman, who shall be nameless, secured, for causes that shall be nameless also, a divorce and journeyed abroad. Whether or not she collaborated in a theory we have long entertained, to the effect that a woman who marries

a second time does not deserve to have lost her first husband, is immaterial. The point is that, discovering the name she bore—at arm's length—had its disadvantages, she purchased the right to be known and addressed as Princess. Principessa della Luna Bianca, let us say. A year passed. Two perhaps. Ultimately it fell about that at some function or other a man who had been introduced gazed musingly at her and asked if he had not had the pleasure of meeting her somewhere before. The Princess smiled and tapped him with her fan. "Why, yes, indeed; don't you remember? You used to be my husband."

The story has a moral, as all proper stories should have. Titles ought to be purchasable here. Such an arrangement would enable women to dispense with husbands. That in itself is enough to commend it. Society would be delightful were women all married and all men single. But the idea has another charm. It would check the export of heiresses. The latter are at a premium. Commercially speaking, the demand exceeds the supply. There are not enough to go around. As a consequence, in the absence of a measure such as we have suggested, we see no good and valid reason why another should not

be passed inhibiting their abduction. A bill of this kind would not interfere with the tariff, and might increase the revenue. It would be a protective measure of the proper sort. The open door is all very well, but not where our girls are concerned.

Girls, though, are so constituted that there is no arguing with them. They believe in free trade. From certain statistics and studies we are enabled to infer that they believe in titles also. And very logically. A title can be divided. A duke makes a duchess, whereas a man of brains cannot share his intellect with a fool. Were it otherwise strawberry leaves might cease to appeal.

Yet were things otherwise than as they are life might be fair as a dream. Obviously, it is just the reverse. A woman's heart, for instance, —or, more exactly, the heart of a pretty woman —is a bonbon wrapped in riddles. A fool may stop to solve, but a wise man nibbles away. And very good it tastes, too, until indigestion ensues, and he turns to other fare. For the devil of it is that no man can subsist on one dish. However delicious the dish may be the hour comes when it palls. Muhammad probably understood this fact when he promised to the faithful throughout

all eternity a fresh houri every day. Every day is perhaps excessive. Moreover, an eternal feast might prove as distressing as an eternal fast. Yet we assume there was to be nothing compulsory in the matter and that the faithful could diet if they chose. "Not too much of anything," said a profound epicure; and whether served with riddles or without, a variety of bonbons, even in courses, even in Paradise, must become as indigestible as the repetition of one particular sweet.

This is not right. It is not right that man should be so constituted that he needs must weary, not merely of one dish, but of all. But against this sorry scheme of things novelists without number and poets without publishers have spawned copy by the ton. Quite unavailingly, too. Nobody by taking pen and paper can add a charm to a statue. Life is just about as hard. The scheme is indeed sorry, particularly when you consider that the world is filled with charming people whom we never meet—except in a few memoirs that are out of print and a few operas that are out of date. Ballets, indeed, occasionally present them, especially the variety known to foreigners as *féeries*, which are delightful comminglings of fair faces, lips

of silk, incandescent eyes, skirts of tulle, shuttled with clinging measures, sudden caresses, startling flowers, auroras, and apotheoses. Representations of this order are really consolatory. They fascinate the eye, release the imagination, and send it vagabonding afar through the marvels of lands where dreams come true.

"*O Paradis*," the tenor sings in the last act of "*L'Africaine*," "*O Paradis, sorti de l'onde*." There it is, and without the nuisance, too, of assisting at the soprano's demise under an upas-tree. In these lands there is nothing of that kind — at most the spectacle of a faithless favourite sewn in a sack and tossed by your hurrying eunuchs into the deep and indifferent sea. That, though, is a sight very dreamlike and agreeable to contemplate. So, too, are the caravans of Circassians, the swaying palanquins, the sombre and splendid bazaars. The turbans of the merchants that pass are heavy with sequins and secrets. The pale mouths of the blue-bellied fish that rise from the sleeping waters are aglow with gems. In courtyards curtained with cashmeres chimeras and hippogriffs await your approach. In the air is the odour of spices, the scent of the wines of Schiraz. The silence is threaded with the hum

of harps, with the murmur of kisses and flutes. The days are grooved with alternating delights; they detain, indeed, but the nights enthrall. There are a thousand and one of them, and they are the preludes to the *Pays des Songes*.

Before entering a mosque the Moslem leaves his slippers at the door. Before entering fairy-land leave stocks in the Street, perplexities behind, and with them the usual collection of unhallowed ruminations. These things are as sacrilegious as automobiles would be. They are out of place in a land where the palace of the White Cat rears its enchanted turrets to the sky, where at any moment you may stumble over the *Belle au Bois Dormant*, find Cinderella's little foot in your hand, encounter the seduction of sylphs, the witchery of the willis, feel the April of their lips on yours, taste the rapture of life as it ought to be, the savour of immaculate joy.

Before Tahiti was vulgarised by Loti, and Bora Bora took to moral corsets, it is possible that the savour was apprehensible there. It is possible that in some of the untrotted islands of the South Seas an illusion of it still subsists. But elsewhere it has gone. Even the ballet does not produce it any more. It has vacated the earth as beauty will do. Progress is too

utilitarian for either. What progress does not need it lops. It has made it easy to travel and nowhere to travel to. Enchantments have evaporated, hippogriffs are no more. The sky has changed and colours with it. There are scenes as there are sorceries that have gone from us for ever. There are advertisements where there were witcheries, commerce where there were caprices, patent medicines in lieu of enthrallments, the shriek of steam where sylphs have strayed. The one place in which the past and the poetry of it persevere is the neighbourhood of thrones. There is the ideal's last refuge. There, too, is the Mecca of Vanity Square.

Americans who want to get there, and cannot, catalogue as snobbish those who can and do. Everything being possible, the cataloguing may be exact. But snobbishness is not appreciated at its worth. It is something very commendable. Snobbish people are always trying to appear other than what they are, and the effort is certainly virtuous. Contentment is a very degraded condition. It is bovine. Discontent is a most reassuring sign. People are always discontented when they are trying to improve. The desire for improvement is an aspiration, and what aspiration more praiseworthy can

there be than the ambition to look down on your neighbour? Call it snobbish if you will, but recognise that snobbishness has its merits.

Courts, too, have theirs. Yet if we may believe what we hear, and that is always such a pleasure, they are not what they were. Those who frequent them take a succulent satisfaction in relating the disillusionments they have met. Even so, apart from the ballet, they are the sole resorts capable of suggesting fairyland now. It is unfortunate that Mr Cook is not in a position to supply round-trip tickets to them, but, progress aiding, no doubt that enterprise will come. Meanwhile, one of the easiest passports being a title, it is only natural that the latter should appeal.

There are, though, titles and titles. A year or two ago the *Revue des Revues* demonstrated that those promenaded by members of the Jockey, the Pommes de Terre, and the Cercle de la Rue Royale were not worth the cards on which they were printed; that there was not an authentic noble in the lot. The demonstration was denounced as unpatriotic. We saw it alleged that it was calculated to throw a scare into the hearts of American girls, who, being heavy consumers, had largely increased the

national wealth. At the time this argument did not seem to appeal to our friend and brother-in-letters, M. Henri Rochefort. "Should it occur," he declared, "should the hour come when our sprigs of nobility are no longer purchased by exotic quails, I, for one, would not weep for grief." And M. Rochefort added: "The idle descendant of a Crusader is a sucking pig. The female Yankee is a peacock. What good can such a couple work? There may have been unions between them which have not turned out badly, yet in that case the parties have been more lucky than wise."

M. Rochefort is quite right. It was, of course, very rude of him to call our heiresses names. Besides, admitting them to be quails, they can't be peacocks also. That is impossible. Ornithology is unacquainted with any such fowl. But he scored a point. To us as to him the heiress is a *rara avis*. Hence the beauty of the measures which we have suggested. Hence the *pro bono publicanum* of them, too. Though we have lost our bisons let us preserve our birds—from Frenchmen at least—and while we are at it, from all other foreigners as well. Russians especially, though very taking, should be admired with circum-

spection and avoided with care. They are all princes, and we know what the Bible says about them. If we have our facts correctly—and if not it would not surprise us—their prevalence is due to some old ruffian of a Tsar who in a drunken fit ordered every hereditary title, save those appertaining to his own family, to be abolished and the documents relating to them destroyed. These titles some successor or other restored, but as the original grants were no longer in existence everybody who possessed the energy was free to put in a claim. From the results we should judge that the number of persons possessing that energy must have been inordinate.

German titles are not advantageous either. When authentic they are awkward, and American purchasers are not in favour in Berlin. The Kaiser calls them *gemeine Amerikanerinnen*. English titles, though they come higher, provide more for the money. They are, perhaps, the best. But though the best, we cannot regard them as desirable for our girls. When obtained, certain results have occasionally ensued. In these instances the party of the second part is usually a duke who in other circumstances would prefer to follow a fashion set

by his ancestors and get a bride from among the nobility of his land. But the nobility is poor, the castle is crumbling, the moat is choked, sheriffs are passing over the draw-bridge, there are no warders to guard it any more. In short, there are ways and means to be considered, and who can supply them so well as a nice little American girl?

That little girl is not merely nice; she is charming. She never omits to have in her that which will make a duchess worthy of the strawberry leaves. And so quickly does she assimilate the conditions of her new existence that no one suspects her origin, no one dreams that she once had a twang, that she lived in a land of savages and dressed in feathers and beads. No; no one knows it except the duke, and he is too ducal to tell, too considerate to let anyone suppose that, among the redskins where he found her, had she not had bag upon bag of wampum he would have rubbed noses and passed on his way. And he is very sweet to that little girl, very loving, very thoughtful, very courteous, until it occurs to him that there are other women in the land, that a duke acknowledges to himself but one law — his pleasure, and to his duchess but one duty —

neglect. And presently in the castle, rebuilt now and rewarordered, yet so far from the long grass and palm-trees of home, that little girl will sit and weep, and if she is a good little girl, as all nice little American girls are supposed to be, she will sit and weep alone.

The tableau is affecting, yet hardly emulative. But, then, arrangements of this kind do not always turn out so badly. On the contrary, they turn out worse. The parties to them yawn in each other's face.

Such are the conditions in Vanity Square. When those who dwell there are not up to some devilishness they are bound to be alarmingly dull.

II

THE GOLDEN FOLD

SAID a man to us once : "I have a big income, I have a big house. I want to get into society. How can I do it?" "Bite by bite," we replied. He took the tip. Everybody with whom he had so much as a bowing acquaintance he asked, re-asked and asked again to dine. Some accepted. Some went so far as to be decently civil in return. Before he moved to another and, we assume, a higher sphere, you could have read his name in the papers every day of your life. That is social success.

Coincidentally, a woman of wealth approached us with a cognate query. "Leave a lot of p. p. c.'s and go abroad," we told her. The advice was taken. The lady left cards on everyone she knew not yet longed to, migrated to Mayfair, consorted with countesses, returned to Manhattan, where, received at first as a distant cousin, ultimately she succeeded in dying in an odour of perfect gentility. What more could the heart desire?

These are magnificent instances. But they occurred in an epoch when New York was closer-fisted and more open-armed than now. To-day, barring the court circles of Vienna and the region known in mythography as the Faubourg Saint-Germain, there is no society in which the line is drawn tighter.

That line is not the clothes-line. In Manhattan you behold coronets on republican cambrics, crowns on democratic heads, and débutantes in three-thousand-dollar frocks. These things are very beautiful. So, too, is the taste of the exponents. *C'est le monde ou l'on s'en fiche.*

The line is not drawn at birthmarks either. The latter are essential in Vienna. But nowhere else. To be *hoffähig* there you must have a bushel of quarterings. You need not necessarily have anything more. They suffice. But in their absence you possess nothing which represents, however remotely, a recognisable existence. Your dimensions become microscopic. You are a minim, a molecule, a mite.

The Faubourg Saint-Germain is assumed to be equally fastidious. The assumption is erroneous. The Faubourg is more exacting. There your quarterings are important but so also is the

quality of your intelligence. Descent from a problematic Crusader is a prime prerequisite. But, incidentally, you must be negative. Anything that savours of originality is distinctly common—*rasta*, to use a localism of the realm. *C'est le monde où l'on s'ennuie.*

Manhattan is more liberal. Birth is not a requisite. If it were, the golden fold would be composed of young people still in their teens. Society, as at present organised, had no existence twenty years ago. The men and women who moved and had their social being then have been lost and submerged in the plutocratic flood. Here and there a few ultimate survivors linger on. But their condition is quasi-phantasmal. At an affair that occurred during the winter, a woman said to us: "Who is that man over there who does not seem to know anyone?" "An old New Yorker," we replied.

Brains are not a requisite either. In that Manhattan has modelled itself after the Faubourg. But, unlike the Faubourg, in and about Manhattan originality counts. It not merely counts, it consists in devising new ways of being dull. In a society at once so polished and so ornate that is quite as it should be. The result, too, is commendable. Society toils

and spins yarns, but it does not read. That is not because it does not know how. It is because it has a fine contempt for literature—yet a contempt which, though fine, is hardly that which familiarity breeds.

Though birth is not a requisite, or brains either, genealogy is. The statement being complex, illustrations may clarify it. In London you begin by being smart and end by going into trade. In New York you begin by going into trade and end by being stupid. The process is not identical, but the result is the same. With this difference, however. In London the smartness of smart people, whether in trade or out, is due to genealogical memories. In New York smartness is derived from genealogical manufacturers.

And quite naturally. It is related of a Turk that, being shown over the country seat of an English gentleman, he mused at the pictures of the incumbent's progenitors. "You paint them?" he asked of the housekeeper. The woman replied that she did not know how to paint. "You try," he added, "and you paint better."

On Fifth Avenue housekeepers are spared such sarcasm. There are a dozen houses we wot of in which the pictures of the owners' ancestors are

works of the highest art. No art, indeed, could be higher. For while the people depicted in the English portraits once lived, however hideously, the people whom the pictures on Fifth Avenue represent never lived at all. There is triumphant democracy.

There is surprising magic, too. Endearing examples of similar witchcraft reside in the archives of the local biographical society, which, during its incubatory incorporation, excited the hilarity of the impolite. It used to be a jest in Europe that we imported our nobility. This institution has done away with that slur. Statistics in hand, it has shown that we produce enough not only for home consumption but for export purposes to boot. According to the statistics cited, we have already succeeded in raising a regiment of descendants of Alfred the Great and an army of descendants of other and yet greater sovereigns.

After all, why not? Yet precisely as in an occasional newspaper article you read of a prince running a lift here, of another serving as waiter there, of a third who has set up as shoemaker somewhere else, and, all of them, the world forgetting by the world forgot, so does New York society ignore those who are merely

princely and nothing else. As one may see, its line is by no means lax.

In spite of an absurd idea to the contrary, that line is not wholly auriferous. Nine months out of twelve the hotels of New York are congested with Croesuses, with whom even the clerks will not condescend to converse. Apart from these hobo millionaires, the town is packed with plutocrats, of whose existence we learn only through hearing that they are dead. Occasionally, as in a recent case, they have to be murdered to attract our attention.

These poor devils come from the pampas, the savannahs, the mines, the lakes, from the Lord knows where else besides. They come, allured by the phantasmagoria of the mirage projected from Upper Fifth Avenue, drawn by newspaper reports of famous functions, dazzled by the glamour of the golden fold. The sheen of the spangles of glittering gaieties entrances such wives and daughters as they have managed to accumulate. It magnetises the loot of their hazardous days. Then, too, knowing the country is free, believing that one man is as good as another, certain that they have the coin, convinced that that talisman is a sesame, urged by the females of their clan, propelled by their

own ambitions, excited by such imagination as they possess, in dreams forecast and in leaded type they behold the announcement of their presence among the gala gangs behind the gilded gates. Whereupon the poor devils conclude that, since the dream is blissful, the realisation must be Paradise.

In the thousand and one nights that were less astronomic than our own Paradise was a definite resort. It was very neighbourly. It was just overhead. Since then it has tumbled down. What is worse, there is nothing to take its place. You cannot go to Elysium. It is out of date. There is no use getting a guide-book and looking up Valhalla. It has fallen to pieces. It does not pay to hunt for lodgings in the Orient either. Devachan is a fiction and Nirvana a fraud. The Star of Ormuzd has burned out in the sky. The Lotus of Azure has vanished.

These plaisances were so many synonyms for happiness. In their disappearance it is but natural that the mind of the ordinary man should cast about for a substitute. The mind of the ordinary man is an engaging collection of zeros. An ordinary woman has the mind of a hen. The latter appreciation is not our own.

It was expressed by Confucius, who considerately added that an extraordinary woman has the mind of two hens.

To a conjunction of intelligences of this order society appeals as Paradise did in nights less astronomic. But because society appeals to them it by no means follows that they appeal to society. On the contrary. Along Fifth Avenue they have the substance of shadows on glass. There the tramp millionaires, whom we have been considering, discover, very greatly to their own amazement, and without any assistance whatever from idealistic philosophy, that, in spite of their coin, they do not exist: that they are not even the perceptions of a perceiver. Then it is quite one to them whether they are murdered or not. Dreams are true while they last. The dreams of these poor devils do not linger long after they have crossed the ferry.

Yet what could be more logical? There are people who compose cantatas. They have the gift for that sort of thing. There are others who can tell what will not happen to you six months hence. They have the faculty for such clairvoyance. There are women who, on not a dollar more than twenty-four thousand a year,

manage to look like angels. Only, of course, much better dressed. It is an art of theirs. There are novelists whose produce sells by the ton. They have a charm that appeals to chambermaids.

It is the same way with New York society. To belong to it birth is not necessary. It is not, as vagrant plutocrats fancy, a question of bank accounts. Brains have nothing to do with it, breeding less. It is wholly and solely a matter of temperament.

In Paris it is a platitude that a man is born an Academician as he is born a prelate or a bore. He may, if it pleases him, abuse the Academy continuously, and be elected none the less; but three hundred masterpieces, recognised as such by the genuflections of an adoring universe, and even by the Academy itself, will not aid him to open its doors unless he be predestined.

Society is quite like the Academy. If destiny has given you the temperament it is a mere detail who and what you are. Your mother may have been a cook and your grandfather a crook—you will get there. But if you lack the temperament, then, though you descend from Charlemagne, though you have the manners of a Chesterfield, the genius of Cæsar, and the coin

of Cræsus, you might as well try your hand at cantatas, at clairvoyance, at seraphising on small sums, at charming chambermaids with stupidities, as attempt to get in. Yet if, through accident, attraction, or affiliation, you should do so, you will not remain. It will not be because you are urged to go. It will be because you do not care to stop. The temperament will be lacking.

Given the temperament, and, in an atmosphere of orris, you will discover women talking about nothing at all to men who have devoted their lives to the subject. In sittings limited in spaciousness, but unlimited in splendour, you will encounter the prettiest girls in the world; heiresses of the first water, the deliciousness of ruedelapaixian confections, the aroma of Manhattan mingling with the accents of Mayfair.

You will observe, too, the same *piaffe* as in Paris; the same veneer that Vienna displays. You will miss, though, the grace and seduction of manner, the desire, coupled with the design, to please, which is noticeable there. But then, as you will be necessarily aware, the local young person has been so cracked up that she fancies herself top of the heap, dispensed as such from any effort.

In health, colouring, spirits, and general *je m'en fichisme* she is indeed a little dear, and the fact that she has not been schooled to charm has, as all things else have, an explanation. In European circles women have nothing to do but that, and they do it to perfection. They put flowers in your heart, to which, years after, you may turn and find fresh and unfaded still. With *legerdemain* of that kind the breeziness of our climate interferes. Girls here have other allurements, tricks worth two of that. They are disquietingly candid and delectably serene. Moreover, like all *objets de luxe*, they are a pleasure to behold. It is their conversation that is less enticing. On the subject of that which it is colloquial to term Who's What, and Why, the immaturest among them could give a lexicographer points. But that aria at an end, the rest of their repertoire detains only those who have the temperament to withstand it.

Aristocracy, an old chemist announced, should be composed of equal parts of beauty and of brains. In the pharmacy of American plutocracy brains are put up homeopathically. The entertainments of the gilded gang provide you with everything that eye and stomach can decently require. There is the beauty and the bowl.

Il y a, comme aux beaux jours d'antan, des franchises repues et des vastes lippées. Yet always by way of interlude are there illustrations in the gymnastics of yawning.

Save among the decrepit and the kids, there is rarely the rumour of a flirtation. Of scandal, this year, there has been barely a breath. In Europe, *autre guitare*. But over there women, being sure of their position, do not bother themselves with it, while in New York they are too busy with what they call their status to go poaching on one another's preserves. The tone is therefore quite edifying, and very dull. It resembles that of a club of millionaires in which few of the members think and none have emotions.

This is not right. These people should do nothing but sin and sparkle. They should be forced to amuse us, if only in return for the attention with which they are gratified by the country at large. Time was when they did. It is not so long ago that they treated the world to a series of splendid wickednesses, to stunning treacheries, to superb betrayals, and therewith to an arrogance so medieval that in certain cases occurring in our private practice we saw mortification morbus set in and death ensue. It was like living in a novel to move among these

people, and not a three-volume English affair either, nor yet in the dollar and fifty cents' worth of truck which American authors serve, but a novel such as d'Annunzio could write and the authorities would seize.

For never, perhaps, except in the Rome of the Cæsars, has there been gathered together in one city a set so rich, so idle, so profoundly uninterested in anything save themselves. No wonder there are proletarians. There is no debt as faithfully acquitted as contempt, and the disdain of these delightful people for the outer world, for the world that is outside of Burke and their own *Libro d'Oro*, is a point for the future psychologist, a nut, too, for those wastrels to crack who emerge and emigrate from the Lord knows where, with the dream, absurd in its pathos, of being welcomed in the golden fold.

III

THE GILDED GANG

SOCIETY we once defined as the paradise of the plebeian. We are frequently in error, and we were then. Morality we coincidentally defined as consisting in improper thoughts of other people. There, too, we were in error. But little mistakes of this nature have never disturbed our conscience. To err is highly literary. Besides, a man who is always right is a bore. If he does not send you to sleep he makes you feel ignorant, and either proceeding is very vulgar.

The awakening to our errors is due to an eruption, quite volcanic, which not long ago convulsed the press and reverberated through the small talk of the land. In the light of it we beheld society as we had never beheld it before. We learned that the gilded gang, which is indifferently known as the Smart Set and the Upper Four, is an aristocracy without a pedigree, whose Newport morality is a zero from which the periphery has gone.

All of which, in correcting our errors, interested us very much. It disclosed vistas of gaiety which we had not discerned before. It disclosed originality also. Personally, we have never found either at Newport. There, as in the metropolitan crush, the gilded gang has seemed to us ornamental and inept. In other climes and epochs society was livelier. According to history, it used to sin and sparkle. According to observation, to-day it sins and yawns.

That may be progress, but it is not right—the yawning at least. The sinning is another guitar, on which we will presently strum. Besides, assuming that sinning there be, it has a precedent to back it up. What more could the censorious require? Unless we are again in error, and it would not surprise us if we were, Antisthenes described the *jeunesse dorée* of Athens as the cosmetics of sin, an expression which so pleased Juvenal—or if not Juvenal, then some other chap—that he, or whoever it may have been, handed it out in Rome. It will be seen that we have no pseudo-erudition to display. But there are certain things we remember. Among others, the inkstand which Luther flung at Satan and his pomps. That is entirely too lovely to forget. So also is the *farandole* which Diderot, Voltaire,

et al., executed on the follies of fine folk, and from which a revolution ensued. And look at Mr Dooley! All these cynics have shown up society quite as thoroughly as the press has talked it down. As a result, progress is manifest. Where it sparkled, now it yawns. Only the sinning remains.

For sinning there is, though it be but in taste, of which society has so much, and all of it so bad. Yet, no; there we are in error again. Not all of it, but a good deal. A good deal is more than enough. "Not too much of anything," said Epictetus, whom society never reads, not, of course, because it does not know how, but because it does not consider it smart to read anything. And why should it? In these days of emetic fiction there is nothing fit to read. Then, too, it is so much more delightful to live novels. In which respect, if we may believe everything we hear, the existence of the gilded gang is comparable, as already noted, to a romance that d'Annunzio might write, and which if he did the authorities would seize.

Let us see about that. To see it the better *place aux dames*. Among them we have beheld not a few who resembled nothing so much as

figurines of Fragonard retouched by Félix. They are adorably constructed and constructed to be adored. What is quite as appetising is the fact that they dress with a deliciousness that never anywhere, at any time, has been exceeded. Whether they digress with equal effect is a matter which we will reach later on. Meanwhile it is worth noting that the beauty of the raiment of the young empresses of old Byzance is not in it with them. A dream, a delight, and a desire, is the briefest form in which their millinery can be expressed.

In addition, even during the *Régence*—had you had the good fortune to have lived in that fortunate time—you could not have dined more admirably than you may at their tables. The service is impeccable. At Windsor V. R. was served with greater pomp but not with greater perfection. The tables, too, are set in homes far more satisfactory and infinitely less uncomfortable than many a royal palace. And about those tables you will see stones by comparison to the glare of which there are crown jewels that are lack-lustre.

The bank accounts are as gorgeous as the gems. Since the days when Caligula got away with a sum equal to four hundred millions of

our money, and in so doing succeeded, to his delight and to ours, in turning himself into a bankrupt god, an emperor without a copper, since those fair days, and the fairer ones still, in which Heliogabalus declined to touch the same garments, the same shoes, the same jewels, the same dishes, the same lips twice, there has been nothing like unto it—financially, that is—no, not even when Hertford, Hamilton, and De Grammont-Caderousse startled Europe with the splendid uproar of their orgies.

Add that all up and you will find that there is more money represented in the gilded gang than in any other society however famous or infamous. You will find also that among these people there are better opportunities for prodigality than have been enjoyed by any society however distinguished or extinguished. And not merely for prodigality profuse and perverse, but for wickedness magnificent and majestic. Since the Medici vacated the planet and the Sun Kings of France followed their excellent example, never has there been such a chance.

Yet that chance which is there, seated at their tables, careering in their automobiles, scudding in their yachts, accompanying them to the links, tiptoeing along their halls, plucking at their

sleeve, whispering to them: "Behold me!" they ignore.

Is not that a shame? Indeed it is. It is regrettable also. It is deplorable that from settings such as these, from halls so spacious and *lingerie* so divine, succession of stunning scandals do not burst like bombs.

But they do not burst. We regret it, and our regret, if not poignant, at least is ethical. The splendour of billionaires and millionairesses should be manifest in Sardanapalian luxury, in super-Babylonian magnificence, in Belsarazurian festivals, in Assyrian disdain of the prejudices of the herd. What are they here for, if not to entertain us? Yet were they to go about it in any such fashion we would affect to be shocked, of course, for that is our endearing custom. But, privately, how we should revel!

A succession of such things, a beautiful string of bombs bursting to an accompaniment of *fanfares* in the monotony of the eternal blue of our sky, a profusion of stunning scandals tossed off like Roman candles in the azure of our nights, a cascade of devilry and gorgeousness combined, a high projection of incandescent loveliness and licence exploding to the hum of

harps and the kiss of flutes, would do us all a world of good.

Yes, indeed, it would heighten us in our own esteem. It would show Europe that in the diversions of our gilded gang we have nothing to envy its royal circles. There is patriotism, is it not? Of course, the press would rail and the pulpit fulminate. Yet, what of it? It is only through sheer excesses that man can in any way approach the ideal which Nature in her divine prodigalities herself has set. It is only through the higher emotions and their transcendant aspirations that man can so much as attempt to clutch some fringe of her mantle of stars. Therein are the ethics of our regret.

The gilded gang does not look at it in that light. Now and then behind their gates there will occur a romance unpretentious as one of Chopin's, now and then the waltz from "Faust" is heard, now and again the *Ernani involame* warbles from dog-collared throats. But the *romanze* and the *arias* are never very palpitant. They are usually without conviction and generally in minor keys.

That is not right. When Louise of Belgium wanted to sing she sang at the top of her voice. It is true she was declared insane, but if every

princess of similar lungs were treated in that fashion the asylums of Europe would have to be enlarged. And look at that other princess, an American this time, who executed a *fugue* with a fiddler. She made no bones about it whatever. And consider the bedrabbled ermine in the various courts over the way, including those of bankruptcy, Saxony, and divorce.

Consider, too, the men. There is Leopold, for instance. This gentleman is now too advanced in years to perform any more fantasias, and his neighbours, the last King of Holland and the Prince of Orange—Lemons to the ladies of the ballet—are dead, damned, too, for all we know to the contrary, *bien qu'ils soient morts en hommes qui savent vivre*. Yet these people, together with their cousins throughout Europe, are the very ones whom the gilded gang do their best, though not their worst, to imitate, and in no way succeed at all. The day is not distant, *que dis-je*—what are we saying?—it is here, when the giving of automobiles and polo ponies by way of cotillon favours, will, with little games of pillows and keys and other nursery romps, satisfy, and amply, their conceptions of What's What.

A condition of things such as this cries, if not

to heaven, at least to us all. It is a matter that narrowly escapes being personal. Many of us, it is true, possess only such acquaintance with the gilded gang as seeing their name in the paper affords. Many of us, it is also true, are no better off than the law allows. Yet though we live on a hundred dollars a day we can always dream of a million. Moreover, in a land so well supplied with bumper crops as this is, nobody can tell what spoiled old men of Fortune the poorest of us may yet become. In addition, the gilded gang being an aristocracy without a pedigree, we are not obliged to regret any more than they do that the best part of us is not underground.

But the point is that we are all interested in them. As a nation we are simply splendid. We are a righteous, self-respecting, God-fearing lot. We have no cant or hypocrisy or pretence about us. We never have stood, and never will stand, for snobbery of any kind. In spite of which, or, perhaps, precisely on that account, entrance to the gilded gang is the goal of every ambition.

A very laudable ambition it is. Entrance there enables you to take your proper place. It fortifies the consciousness of your merit. It throws your neighbour into spasms of indigna-

tion. That is quite as it should be. Yet, the circle being restricted, few are chosen and many left. Do you know what happens to the latter? Some affect a lofty indifference. Some succumb to mortification morbus. Some become hydrophobic. We have beheld splendid specimens foaming at the mouth. We have understood that retention from functions kept their wives awake. We have been told that it gave their daughters nightmares.

Quite unavailing, too. Indifference does not appeal to the smart set. Hydrophobia, insomnia, and nightmares do not either. There are but two things that do. The first is money; the second is push. Given these little things, and in no time you are in the thick of it. Without them, then, though you descend from Charlemagne and have the soul of Chopin, you will never get there. *Jamais, nunca, niemals*, never.

To be modish you must have money; tons of it. You must have push; acres, and more to spare. In modesty there is not a bit of merit. In genteel poverty there is no gentility now. The worship of what clergymen call the fatted calf—or is it the golden one?—never was more ardent. That calf has Nebuchadnezzared the country. His fleece is as admired in society as

his fleecing is loved in the Street. Yet, has a calf a fleece? No matter. The simile is there, and behind it is the gilded gang.

These premises accepted, it follows that since admission to it is the dream of every right-thinking citizen and his wife it would be nicer were the gang remoulded more in accordance with our heart's desire. It would not only be nicer, it would be gayer, and if it in any way resembled descriptions which we have encountered, it would be ideal.

These descriptions represent it as composed of vicious, sinful, and wicked people. But was anybody ever really wicked? Has there ever been anything in human nature beyond—or below—egotism, curiosity, the love of power, and the faculty of being bored? Psychology rather doubts it. Even otherwise, an abhorrence, real or affected, for what Mr Swinburne calls the roses and raptures of vice, is distinctly *bourgeois*. Quite so. As for sin, what is it, except what we think it, and does not what we think it depend on where we live?

Conceptions of sin vary with geography, occasionally with the weather, very often with the times. It is not so long ago that the hoop skirt was regarded as an invention of the devil. Next

year or the year after it will be the fashion again. It is not so long ago that a man, when walking with a woman, offered her his arm. Now the woman would be considered indecent if she took it. It used to be the custom to drink claret after dinner. Now there is no claret fit to drink. But there are men who still offer an arm to women, precisely as there are others who drink chemistry and see no sinfulness in it.

The subject therefore, however considered, resolves itself into the point of view. Yet though a criterion escape, and with it a synonym, an autonym we possess. Catalogued as morality, we once, as already noted, defined it as consisting in improper thoughts of other people. In so defining it we have fancied ourselves wrong. But we won't any longer. For it is in those thoughts that sin resides. The most and the worst to be gathered concerning it is obtainable only from the small talk of the pure.

Purity being rumoured to be infrequent in society, it follows that there can be precious little sinfulness there. Apart from occasional lapses of taste there really is not much. For that matter, barring the nursery romps to which we have referred—barring, too, the uncertain *arias* from “Ernani” and “Faust”; barring, also,

the golden calf, the perfection of millinery, the perfection of push, the perfection of cooks—there is not much of anything. Instead of being splendidly sinful the gilded gang is amazingly dull.

Yet, from afar, how it glitters! In view of which—in view, too, of the fact that admission to it is the dream of every imbecile—we know of no good and valid reason why, since we have reconciled ourselves to one definition, we should not reconcile ourselves to another, and again sum up society as the paradise of the pleb.

IV

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING AN EPICURE

THERE is a story, presumably untrue, and therefore all the more delightful, of an epicure who never went anywhere except to bed and the Maison Dorée. He got up, as a gentleman should, at four o'clock in the afternoon, proceeded to the Maison Dorée, and there, in devout meditation, prepared for the serious business of life—which is dining.

Whether or not the story be problematic, neither he nor any one else shall longer observe these rites. The Maison Dorée, the anti-penultimate resort of the gourmet, has fallen.

There is another story, one for the truth of which we can vouch, and which, therefore, is less inspiring, of a lady who went to Paris on her honeymoon, and who, returning there ages later, remarked that it had altered. "Yes, indeed," the poor thing added, with a sigh; "*On ne suit plus les femmes.*"

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That little amusement of the idler, together with the serious business of the epicure, used to constitute the supreme Parisian attractions. Over the subsidence of the amusement we have no tears to shed. The point is that the business is menaced. Long since the Frères Provençaux departed. Vachette has gone. Véfour has vanished. Only in memory does Véry survive. Presently the Café Anglais will close, then Voisin will pass, and the last sanctuary of the high and radiant Muse of Savarin and of Brisse will have crumbled. Then, precisely as sculpture, painting, and the *bel canto* have declined, so will the art of cookery.

The contingency may seem unimportant. It is the reverse. In the art of cookery is the fate of nations.

For that aphorism we are indebted, not to our inner consciousness, but to President Loubet. In the course of a recent address M. Loubet remarked that the destinies of France were involved in the supremacy of her cooks. In default of a text he had a pretext: Germany has conquered France twice. First with her bayonets; latterly with her beer. The result being that, in the restaurants of

Paris, where the high muse once reigned supreme, you to-day need an interpreter to tell you whether the dishes are Bavarian or Berlinese.

That is all wrong. Gastronomy is essentially eclectic. It admits every system, adopts every method, accepts every school, assimilates every theory. It is at once symbolist, Parnassian, romantic, and classic. Art has no frontiers. Gastronomy is, primarily, cosmopolitan. It may be French, Italian, Chinese, Russian, occasionally Spanish, but German — never ! Never Bavarian. Never Berlinese.

German cookery is bad when it does not happen to be worse. In which respect it resembles our own. Yet that, perhaps, is libel. There is nothing viler than good, plain American fare.

No, nothing. A poet once sneered at us and said that we have a hundred religions, and but a single sauce—inferior at that, he might have added, and probably would have, had he thought. The oddity of it is that we did not get the sauce from Germany. Yet, from her refinements, and the lack of them, there is a hint that could be advantageously absorbed.

At the court of Hanover—to-day extinct—the king was graciously pleased to command that on the royal menus there should appear, conjointly with the dishes, the names of the artists by whom the dishes had been composed.

The king struck the proper note. Anonymity is advantageous to the critic, to the criminal, and to the cook. But not to the *cordons bleus*. A masterpiece should be signed.

A perfect dinner should resemble a concert. As the *morceaux* succeed each other, so, too, should the names of the composers. You may not care particularly to know what their names are, but they think you do. The idea gratifies them. It heightens their *maestria*, improves their technique, encourages them in the efforts of conception. It stimulates in them that noble pride which induced the immortal tragedy of the kitchen—the suicide of Vatel, unable to survive the dishonour of a *plat manqué*.

Those were the good old days. At one particularly delectable banquet there was produced a representation in wax work of the labour of a queen and the birth of a prince. At another Mount Ætna was served, with fireworks going

off from the crater. For another there was prepared a middle dish of gods and goddesses eighteen feet high, yet which, to the righteous scorn of the artist, could not be set, because as he put it: "Monseigneur refused to have the ceiling heightened!"

These things were not, of course, intended to be eaten. The genius who had delighted your palate devised them to charm your eye. They were due perhaps, as all things are, to reminiscence. In days not better, but elder and more orgiastic, the courses were served on platters so wide that they covered the tables. On these platters you encountered dormice cooked in honey, sea wolves flavoured with cinnamon, and occasionally a beautiful boar, from which, when carved, hot quinces fell and live thrushes flew.

There was magic in that. Or, perhaps, it would be more exact to say that there was a cheerful disregard of expense. The art of dining then was rather elaborate. Vitellius did not consider excessive for one meal a sum equivalent to fifteen thousand dollars. In four months Cæsar ran up a supper bill of twenty-five millions. We are not inventing that. It is all down somewhere. So, too, is the fact that the guests whom

Heliogabalus entertained had set before them loaves of silver, puddings of gold. Before them, too, was a menu embroidered on the cloth—not a mere list of dishes, but pictures, drawn with the needle, of the dishes themselves, and, presently, when the precious jest in metal had been enjoyed, you were served with camels' heels, combs torn from living cocks, flamingoes' brains, nightingales' tongues, peas and amber, fig-peckers peppered with pearl dust, jewels in jelly. For napkins there were boys in whose curly hair you wiped your hands. For tobacco there were perfumes. For middle dishes there were live lions, properly secured, of course, but sometimes a stupid guest, not knowing that, fainted from fright. When the dinner was done panels in the ceiling opened and flowers fell, so many that now and then guests that had fainted were smothered.

Charles Lamb maintained that no woman who led a pure life would refuse an apple dumpling. Between the table of an emperor and the table talk of an essayist there is a gap which, if you please, we will bridge in a moment. The art of dining, as of writing, consists in graceful transitions. It is general ignorance of both which makes our literature so savour-

less and our cooks so bad. So bad, that the late Mr Travers, on seeing, newly hung in his dining-room, the legend: "God Bless Our Home," exclaimed with enthusiasm, "Yes, indeed. God bless our home, and damn our cook." The latter, it is agreeable to assume, had produced an apple dumpling.

That is a dish for which, in epicurean Rome, a caitiff of a cook would not have been cursed merely, but crucified. The art of the *entremets sucré* was known in that sybarite city, and its traditions are still preserved by a few—a very few—Neapolitan chefs. But nowadays no one so much as sees sweets—real sweets, that is—except in the Orient and the eyes of their best beloved. The only other variety that can be comfortably assimilated is flattery. Of that the least among us can never have enough.

Other forms should be abolished. In their stead a little extravagance would be acceptable. A lot of it, for that matter. The more the merrier. Extravagance is highly poetic. So also is originality. Metropolitan dinners display neither. The dishes are the same. So also is the talk. Both are abysmally commonplace, utterly *pot-au-feu*. During these solemnities no

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hostess, however smart, has ever been witty enough to introduce a pig.

Why not? In all the wide realm of art there is nothing more ideally voluptuous. A pig, a properly nurtured pig, a pig whose parents have been fed on vipers and who has been bathed in tepid water twice a day, a pig, young, tender, and shy, is of delicacies the most chastely sensuous that has been given mortals to revere. To the perfect pig, particularly to the little pink darlings of the Montaches nursery, the table is but a second cradle, and to the epicure a sheer joy—a joy serene, equable, sedate, a joy wholly suave, quasi-paternal, a joy interpretable only by the hum of harps.

In lieu of which there is the inevitable red-head, or else the tiresome canvas-back that is appropriate but for junketing royalty, yet never the abiding beatitude that this little angel provides, and which, to the hum of harps, it not merely provides, but distils. Lacking the harps, the cherub should be served to the kiss of flutes, or better perhaps, to the accompaniment of the tenor's aria from the last act of "Lucia."

Then you have something fit.

For variation, the seraphic suckling may be

replaced by a *poularde truffée*. It is not up to it. Yet, properly prepared by a poet, there you have a dish that should be eaten with genuflections. It is sacrosanct. The true epicure rises and bows to it. Then in silent emotion he begins. If he thinks of anything earthly it is of the preliminaries and transitions that have lifted him to this bliss.

In regard to anterior courses, we have, in our private practice, obtained excellent results from a *potage crème d'Almond*. You are requested not to read *crème d'Amant*. A spoonful or two of that passing into emptiness is like a rug of silk thrown on a naked floor. Then not terrapin—that horrid little mud-turtle, with its nasty sauce, is, like canvas-back, fit only for touring grand dukes—but a silver eel.

For *entrée*, we have found nothing the matter with truffles. Not the black, but the white. Brought, hermetically sealed in glass, from Piedmont, stewed for fifteen minutes in Sillery, then for fifteen more in Clos de Vougeot, and served like potatoes, in napkins, these things transport you to Devachan.

For *relevé*, a simple fillet of reindeer a trifle decomposed. Or, if that be impracticable, an

amourette—pretty word, isn't it?—of lambkin to the tune, not of mint, which is ignoble, but of violets, which is divine.

There you have a nice little dinner.

In it there is, perhaps, a trace—the very faintest—of originality. There is, perhaps, a symptom or two of prodigality as well. Perhaps, also, there is just a suggestion of art. These condiments are essential. If you are not prodigal you may lead a pure life, but you will remain a poor host. If you are not original you may be a commendable citizen, but you will be always a bore. If you are not artistic you may be a devoted husband, yet never an epicure. It is highly important to be that. At the table of the epicure is the radiant presence of the muse.

Yet here, if you please, a hint may be serviceable. It takes two to eat a good dinner—the dinner and yourself. The number may be increased. But not indefinitely. A big dinner is a bad dinner. The bigger the dinner the worse it is. At a perfect dinner there should be an air of home. When more than twelve are gathered together that air evaporates. Eight is better. Four better yet. To four agreeably assorted people a perfect dinner re-

solves into the ideal. Here endeth the first lesson.

Here is the second: "Not too much of anything," said Epicurus, and, however prodigal you may naturally be, you must remember that. Lavishness should be manifest in the service, in the appointments, in the surprises of the chef, in the orchestras and aviaries behind the screens, but never in vulgar plenty. Leave all that to ignorant millionaires. The distinction of the gourmet resides in virtuosity, not in abundance. His table never groans. It chants canticles *en sourdine*, in the lilt of which you join. Provided, however, and on condition, that Eros be absent.

Eros and the muse never have, and never will, hit it off. The muse is jealous, and Eros distracting. The most agreeable men and women to have about you are those that have loved and are over it. To that end married couples are indicated. But in matters epicurean there is but one safe course: *Se défier de l'amour en général et des femmes en cabinet particulier*. Here endeth the second lesson.

The third concerns the wines. Among smart folk there is an abominable custom of serving nothing but champagne. Champagne is not a

wine. It is a beverage, lighter indeed than brandy and soda, but, like cologne, fit only for demi-reps. Among smart folk you may, if you prefer, have mineral water instead. But not the best. Not Eau de Vals, for instance, or Rhenser, which is superior. But to the gourmet these indecencies do not matter. The gourmet does not drink at dinner. He does not drink before dinner. No gourmet has ever touched that nastiness that is called a cocktail. The cocktail poisons the palate. The epicure perfumes it.

The hour for that sacred rite arrives when the cloth has gone. Then there should be different wines. There is no harm in them whatever. There is an idea to the contrary, but in all matters stupidity is very generally diffused. The harm is not in different but in indifferent wines. In mistaking medicine for Madeira, for instance, or chemistry for claret.

"Claret for boys, port for men, but brandy for heroes," shouted Johnson, who was merely a boor. There is no port in any storm nowadays. There are no heroes either. But there is yet Rousillon, there is yet Château du Pape. There is also Rosenwein, which is the king of all wines

and of which bastard varieties are presented with sonorous titles — Johannisberger, Yellow Seal — or Blue — from the Imperial Cellars, *und so weiter etcetera*, and so forth.

Of such syrupy turpitudes the epicure steers clear. But of Rousillon and of Rosenwein he will take a glass, two glasses, three perhaps, not more. Yet to further perfume the palate he may, if he can get it, gargle a thimble of Tokai Princesse, or, failing that, half a *petit verre* of mandarin liqueur. But nothing else. *Niente, nada, nichts, rien*. Nothing whatever. For he remembers Epicurus, whose life was one long hymn to asceticism, and he has forgotten the prayer: "O Lord, reliver us," for his own liver, at any age, is as good as Methuselah's must have been.

These rites accomplished, he rises not a drunken loon but a fighting cock, inspirited and prepared, if necessary, to administer the the affairs of state, to elevate humanity, and benefit man.

President Loubet is, therefore, quite right. His address contains a hint which we need. The supremacy of French cooks is, perhaps, nonsense. But there is no nonsense about the relation between destiny and gastronomics. If

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more were thought of the latter not only would more be thought, but thought would be less parochial.

Are we wrong, Vatel? Shade of Carême, have we erred?

V

THE SEVENTH DEVIL OF OUR LADY

WOMEN who neglected certain proprieties used to be stoned. For that matter, they are still. But more often than not the stones come from Bond Street. Then, too, the proprieties are not what they were. Originally they must have been quite simple. To-day conceptions of them are tolerably mixed. They vary with the latitude and even with the architecture. In Mayfair and along Fifth Avenue observance of them is an afterthought. In the slums they are a compromise with the police. The Middle Classes are rumoured to have lumped them into a fetish which they call Etiquette.

What that may mean we do not know and refuse to be informed. Erudition is not in our line. But, summarily, the proprieties may be taken as representing that which you expect from your neighbour. Yet, of course, not that

which your neighbour is permitted to expect from you. Otherwise everybody would be of the same mind on the subject, and we should all know What's What.

The fact that we do not all know is sufficiently obvious and equally deplorable as well. But it has its excuse. The proprieties lack a criterion. There is no solvent by which an action can be resolved into right or wrong. Guizot tried to find one and failed. In the course of solemn platitudes spawned through interminable pages he stated with perfect philistinism that the obligations to avoid wrong and cleave to right were laws as much acknowledged by man in his proper nature as are the laws of logic. Yet though he had the gift of producing phraseology as nauseous as that, for the life of him he could not devise a distinction. To give him his due, though, the difficulty that he omitted to remove he was tidy enough to conceal.

Aristotle was quite as circumspect. He stated that it does not depend on ourselves to be good or wicked. The information may be consoling, but it is hardly helpful. Neither is the scholastic corollary that every being acts according to his essence. It is the same idea divested of its

clarity. Nor are we aided by repetitions of the Goethean aria: "*Du bist am Ende was du bist.*" For there we get it again in German. On lines such as these the test is obscure. They promise but do not fulfil. Every silver lining has its cloud.

Here, though, is a break in it. Descartes, who, if we may believe all that we hear, taught of two substances, mind and matter, precisely as if he had seen and counted them, could, Madame de Staël has said, distinguish between right and wrong as readily as between blue and yellow. But is abuse evidence? Besides, women are sad gossips. Hell is paved with their tongues. Moreover, when the remark was made Descartes was too dead to defend himself against any accusation of omniscience.

Yet everything being possible, and assuming that the lady told the truth, in what did this power exist? Surely it was not Madame de Staël's intention to represent Descartes as being so wise that he knew, did he go home late and intoxicated, he would set a bad example to his baby sister, for common-sense could have told him that. Nor could she have meant that Descartes' ability to discriminate consisted in believing that whatever he said was right and

whoever disagreed with him was wrong, for there is nothing unique in that: it is what we all do. *Oui, monsieur, vous aussi.*

Perhaps, then, what the lady meant—pre-supposing that she meant anything and also that she told the truth—was that Descartes knew What's What. If this supposition be correct we have only to inquire what is what, and at once the distinction between right and wrong becomes approachable and the mystery of the proprieties is dissolved.

To do that we have but to determine what attracts, what repels, and then co-ordinate their contradictories. Nothing could be simpler. But here a loop is needful.

Clergymen to whom it has been our privilege to listen have, according to their fervour and grammar, denounced with more or less ability this vice and that, forgetful, or perhaps unaware, that the root of all evil is not original sin but commonplace jealousy. Beside that seventh devil the others that were projected into the swine of the Gadarenes must have been beneficent sprites. Eliminate it from the scheme of things and war would lapse, greed as well, discord ditto, and harmony reign. In lieu of the rivalries and strikes, divorces and dances,

libels and races; instead of the failures and festivities and all the seductions, surprises, and general surreptitiousness that we read about in the papers, there would be nothing to read about at all, and society, through sheer calm, would develop obesity of the mind.

However satisfactory that might be, jealousy is not to be eliminated. It is part and parcel of human nature. Regarded in the abstract it is the woof of every crime. Regarded in the concrete it is a tribute to our virtues. Specifically considered it is the Seventh Devil of Our Lady.

In cataloguing it as such studies and statistics have necessarily made us aware that a jealous woman can be very tiresome to a man. But statistics and studies have made us equally aware that when she is not jealous it is of the man she is tired.

Jealousy is the barometer of a woman's heart. When its manifestations subside her temperature is falling. When it departs she is packing her boxes, she is preparing to follow. For it is the corollary of her love to doubt, to doubt always, to doubt in certainty, to doubt in conviction, to doubt with every possible evidence of constancy under her nose. The heart has logic that logic

does not recognise. Then also, though constancy may be obvious, fidelity is not necessarily so clear. Constancy may demonstrate nothing more than lack of opportunity, but fidelity always demonstrates a lack of imagination. And of the vagaries of the imagination a lady may be, and indeed should be, more jealous than of anything else. Faces fade, but dreams abide.

There is, though, jealousy and jealousy. There is a jealousy that comes of a lack of confidence in another. There is a jealousy far more discreet and infinitely more delicate that comes of a lack of confidence in oneself. To the student of pathology either form is interesting, but on condition that the patient is in skirts. A male patient may, of course, be interesting also, but not more so than any other dog in the manger. The story of Othello and Desdemona is a case in point.

There was a couple admirably mated. The one had no manners and the other no small talk.

In spite of which, or perhaps precisely on that account, their adventures are quite endearing. According to Shakespeare, Othello, not content with being a blackamoor, made a fuss, raised the

roof, and smothered Desdemona with it. Shakespeare described the lady as entirely immaculate. Even had she been otherwise, the proceeding was, to say the least, in bad taste. A man of decent breeding never sees or hears anything that is not intended for him. Moreover, had any smothering seemed necessary, it was himself he should have asphyxiated. Yet bad taste always leads to crime, and to such vulgar forms of it at that. Nowadays, of course, men do not murder their wives, at anyrate in polite society. But some of them do worse. They institute uncivil proceedings. There are, though, others of finer sensibilities who collaborate with their dear departed in an effort to observe the amenities of life, while agreeing that individual tastes shall suffer no interference. *C'est d'un pur.*

Shakespeare to the contrary, we have reason to suspect that Othello was a man of just that highmindedness. Shakespeare, it will be remembered, made the brute a Moor. Personally, we do not know much about Moors, but for purposes dramatic we assume that anything, even to goodness, may, at a pinch, be expected of them. It now appears that Othello was not a Moor but a patrician. Indifference is a patrician trait. Of that, however, more by-and-by. The

point is the sudden discovery that Othello was less black than he was painted. *Les Maures vont vite.*

The discovery came about in this fashion. Recently a palace situated in that quarter of Venice, known as the San Maria Formosa, was demolished. From the rafters documents fell. Collected and collated, it was found that they contained a chronicle of the final years of Venetian dominion over Candia. It was found, too, that in them Don Othello was mentioned as the last governor of the island. It was found, also, that he was a man of rank. The documents, continuing, showed that after his marriage to Desdemona they proceeded to Candia; that later, the island being besieged by the Turks, Desdemona returned alone to Venice; that there she met another, a dearer one yet, a third, perhaps a fourth; that in each instance *sa forte fut sa faiblesse*; that ultimately, Candia having fallen also, Othello supervened; that undonesquely he beat her, subsequently concluded to die, and that for years thereafter the consolable Desdemona resided in that *casa* on the Grand Canal which to-day every gondolier points out with an "*Ecco!*"

These facts, disencumbered for the purposes of

the present paper from layers of detail, were not long since given to the world by the official who in Italy occupies the position of Minister of Instruction. Although they are too good to be true, we will assume that they are exact—all, indeed, except the undonesque greeting which Desdemona received, for that, if the other facts be accepted, seems highly problematic. Our reasons for so regarding it are brief.

The gossip about Desdemona originally appeared in a now forgotten novel. Cinthio, the author of it, was an early Bourget, an earlier Balzac. For literary purposes he went about here and there collecting scandals, which he set up in black and white. In default of linen from his neighbour sometimes he washed his own. In a pretty woman he saw not her eyes but a plot, and from her heart he proceeded to dig it. It was in the observance of this process that the story of Desdemona appeared. That the author was acquainted with her husband is presumable, but whether he collaborated with the young woman in any of her inconsequences we may surmise yet never know. According to his story, however, Othello was a brave young soldier of colour, the glitter of whose exploits awoke Desdemona's love and won for him the command

of the Candian troops. The two are married and embark for the post. With them go an ensign and a corporal. The ensign makes up to the lady. He is repulsed. The emotions she has inspired addle into rage. The ensign recites to Othello that his bride is an abandoned creature and that the corporal is assisting in her *abandon*. Othello bribes him to kill the corporal. The ensign slashes the poor devil in the leg. Then Othello takes a hand; he takes a sand-bag, too, and pounds the lady with it until she gives up the ghost.

Barring the climax, which we assume to be literary, the rest of the story coincides tolerably well with the documents recently found. But here is the objection. Cinthio's novel appeared in 1565. Shakespeare's rendition of it was produced in 1604. The capture of Candia occurred in 1669. As a consequence, if, as we assume, the facts produced by the Minister of Instruction are exact, Othello on his return from Candia could not have been less than one hundred and twenty-five, and Desdemona must have been at least a hundred and ten. At an age so mature one may fancy that all her wild oats had been sown, and, even otherwise, Othello must have been too feeble to beat her and too indifferent to care.

Indifference is a great aid to the maintenance of the proprieties. It is more conducive to harmony than anything we can cite. It is, as we have noted, a trait quite patrician. Obviously then, however young or old the Othello recently discovered may have been, he would have patricianly neglected to see or hear anything that was not intended for him, and by the same token he would have omitted to raise the roof. In order to induce him to do so both novelist and playwright were forced to twist him into a Moor, and as such capable of jealousy that a patrician might feel but not exhibit. Jealousy is the basis of every affection, whether maternal, paternal, filial, sororal, connubial, or even patrician. It is, therefore, a natural emotion. In the case of a woman it is not merely natural, it is occasionally attractive. But emotions that may be attractive in women are always repellent in men.

Here then, at once, if our illustrations have been serviceable, we are back again in the contradictories from which we started. The deductions that ensue follow almost of themselves. For it must be patent that, whether or not Desdemona was lacking in certain circumpections, whether or not Othello was jealous ;

whether, indeed, as may have been and probably was the case, the lady herself was possessed of the seventh devil and through the process of its manifestations drove Othello first to drink and then to derision, in any event, their reciprocal attitudes were not conducive to harmony.

Harmony is that which always has appealed and always will appeal to civilisation. It is Nature's first law, the truest of her vocables. In the form of Beauty, which is its outward and visible sign, it has been an object of worship since worship began. Its exponents were singers and seers. It was Harmony that Hermes taught, it was beauty that the Buddha preached. Civilisation is in love with it and at odds with discord.

If, therefore, our deductions be worth a row of pins, it follows that the test of an action is its beauty or the lack of it, that according as it conduces to harmony or discord, according as it is capable of attracting or repelling, so is it moral or the reverse. In view of these premises it becomes permissible to transfer virtue from ethics to esthetics and to regard the proprieties as functions of art.

And why not? Life, as conducted to-day, is

at its best either ridiculously vulgar or snob-
bishly absurd. Society, which used to sin and
sparkle, now simply sins. There is modern pro-
gress for you, and a progress induced wholly
by a misunderstanding of What's What, com-
plicated by the presence of that seventh devil,
from which all evil proceeds.

VI

DE L'AMOUR

IT is said of somebody somewhere that he became Poet Laureate because he lived on very good terms with his wife. That is certainly poetic. So also is the result. It constitutes a fine case of what a boulevardier might—if he thought of it—describe as *lauriat mediocritas*. Moreover, it shows, or seems to show, that conubial virtues are more estimable than literary sins. That is quite as it should be. But the converse of the proposition is equally true. Domestic difficulties are preferable to halting hexameters. The world is filled with good husbands. Good verse is more scant. For that matter, the better the verse the worse the husband. An ideal spouse would be both a perfect lover and a perfect poet. But no mere mortal has succeeded in being both, for any length of time at least; and very naturally too. The Muse is highly jealous. The task of

serving two masters is nothing to having two mistresses on your hands.

These views have, we fear, a false air of originality. But we claim no copyright on them. They have been running about the bookshelves ever since books were shelved. Said Michelangelo: "Art is wife enough for me." Said Flaubert: "However refractory the Muse may be, she is better than any woman." Said Bacon: "Matrimony is an impediment to great enterprises." Kant, Newton, Beethoven, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Gibbon, Macaulay, Handel, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Camoëns, Voltaire, Cavour, and Mr Dooley appear to have agreed with him. In such fine company we may not presume to intrude. But we are quite sure that there are plenty of people who long for heaven, if for no other reason than because there is no marrying or giving in marriage there. We have not a doubt but that while Mrs Carlyle was among us she felt pretty much that way too. We have not a doubt but that Mrs Donizetti did also. For Donizetti used to get very indignant at that lady, which was not philosophic, and occasionally beat her, which was certainly not polite. Even so, the exercise must have been good for him. One day, five

minutes after laying her out, he composed the "*Tu che a Dio*," an aria which a seraph might envy—the most bewitching in the entire Italian repertory, and which anyone who has heard the last act of "*Lucia*" will recall. Exercise of a similar nature Byron took with his little Guiccioli, and with proper poetic results. One of the liveliest scenes in "*Les Trois Mousquetaires*" was evolved by Dumas just after he had torn hair by the handful from the head of a young person who honoured him with her affection. "Were her tears but pearls," he announced, "I would make a necklace of them."

These incidents happened a long time ago, and fail to stir us very deeply. They do not demonstrate much, either, and what they do it would not be honest to print. But, in conjunction with others, they lead us to assume a few little things; for instance, that had Petrarch got as close to Laura as he wished, he would have maltreated her, or the Muse would have maltreated him. We assume, with equal ease, that had Beatrice been a reality instead of a dream, the world would be minus a volume or two of good verse. We assume, with equal readiness, that had the affairs of Ariosto been as

immaterial, the world would be plus a volume or two which it lacks.

"The position of lover," said Byron, "is not a sinecure." Nor is it. There are times and occasions when it is hard labour. It is a position suited only to the mentally idle. In the life known as cerebral it stultifies when it does not wreck. Consider Sappho. Because a little mucker preferred another mouth to hers she killed herself. And consider Antony. Because of a viper of the Nile he flung away the sovereignty of half the world. Abélard should have known better than to behave as he did. On the other hand, had he omitted to, his name would be the echo of nothing and that of Héloïse be lost. Such is fame.

Such, too, is the fame of Tasso. His verse is less interesting than his woes. The latter were quite poignant. Goethe wrote a play about them, Donizetti an opera, and Delacroix added a picture. The picture represents the poet in prison. That is a fine place for a gentleman. But Tasso, instead of confining himself, as he should have done, to the raising of anapests and *rime amorose*, found, in the wide leisures of the court of Ferrara, nothing better to do than to make up to Leonore of Este. The lady did

not object. On the contrary. But her brother, the Duke of Ferrara, did. By way of putting a stop to the proceedings he had Tasso tossed into a madhouse. Whether or not the honour of the lady was at stake is a detail, immaterial at that. There are women who discredit virtue in affecting to possess it. We have not a doubt that Leonore was one of them. Even so, and even otherwise, we do not blame the duke. We have noted before, and perhaps may be permitted to note again, that there is nothing so perverse as a young poet, except an old one.

How perverse Tasso succeeded in becoming we may surmise and never know. What we do know is that he got what he deserved. He ought to have left all that sort of thing to her. In the case of an ordinary individual we should, of course, strum a different guitar. Ordinary individuals are free to do as they like, and be hanged to them. But the thinker has a mission. For the furtherance of that mission every extraneous desire and each subsidiary whim should be locked in cages, where, for the fun of the thing, now and then he may be permitted to go and see how they are. Women should be to him the *joujoux* they used to be and not the *objets de luxe* they have become. Better still,

he should have everything, even to sex, in his brain.

Seraglios are delightful to read about and particularly to write about, but to live in them must be deadly dull. Personally, we have never tried it. It is true we have lacked the opportunity. Otherwise we should doubtless jump at the chance. But then, thank the Lord, we have no mission. It is a great thing to be an ordinary individual. *Le métier de poète laisse à désirer*. Just how much the business of poet leaves to be desired it would take the ghost of Tasso to tell, of de Musset, too, of Byron as well. There are three whom the love of woman has led from deserts of disgust into oases of ennui. There are three whose genius women have slaughtered. It is only that we may not seem to know more than we do that we refrain from citing three hundred. Yet, while we are at it, there is a case so pertinent, so recent, and so picturesque, that it would be a shame to let it go. Here it is.

During the Third Empire a young man appeared at the Tuileries. Eugénie kissed him, and in the process declared him to be the handsomest prince in the world. At the compliment the young man blushed, and blushed

still more at the embrace. His name was Ludwig. By profession he was king. In addition, he followed the entirely genteel avocation of lover. But *en amateur* merely. He had yet to learn that the art of loving and the art of being loved are separate and distinct. It was his cousin who taught him. This young woman, afterwards Duchesse d'Alençon, lived in the heart of a Bavarian forest. A poet who chanced to encounter her there has related that he mistook her for a sylph—one of those enchanting apparitions that dwelt in dim green woods and long German ballads, and whom princes used to woo. Ludwig mistook her for a saint. To err, poets and princes are liable alike.

There is, a thinker announced, as much mud in the upper classes as in the lower, only, he added, in the former it is gilded. In the case of the young woman Ludwig appears to have discovered the mud, but with the gilt off and the guilt on. Yet not, of course, at once. Meanwhile the girl intended no wrong, and that, perhaps, because she never would have considered wrong anything she wished to do. Moreover, she was very pretty, and pretty girls have more incentives than those who are not. Then, too,

she had another excuse. It had been predicted that she would be burned alive. No one believes much in predictions unless Time comes along and verifies them. In her case Time did. A few years ago she was caught in the fire that occurred in the Paris Bazaar. With a fate such as that before her it may be she tried to make the most of the worst. If the supposition be correct, her success was remarkable. She ruined her life and that of her lover as well.

Ludwig looked as if he had stepped from a fairy tale. As he looked he acted. He charmed peasants and empresses. He suggested romance incarnate and enthroned. These suggestions his cousin lived to see him change into realities. She lived to see him dot the country he ruled with palaces of enchantment. She lived, too, to see him hide himself in them. She lived to see the handsomest prince in the world change into a bloated sot. She lived to realise that it was her work, and, so realising, perhaps was glad to die. For, if not a saint, at least she was human. When ultimately, in cups of champagne strained through violets, he tried to drown his reason, she lost her own. Subsequently, as noted, she lost her life. It may be that it was fate that

felled her, yet in that case it is a pity that fate was so slow. Had it but throttled her in the cradle, or smothered her in the green and quiet of the slumbrous wood, Europe might have enjoyed the spectacle of an ideal king reigning ideally. But the discovery that the girl who had imparadised his heart was no better than the law allows transformed *Lohengrin* into *Hamlet*. He turned his back on her, and incidentally on the world. There developed within him a horror of being seen. At Munich a mechanical device enabled him to be served by invisible hands. When he drove it was at night. Now and again he disappeared entirely. No one knew where he was. Infrequently he received at dinner. The guest whom he preferred was Louis XIV. With him he was quite at home. The royal phantom came and went at his bidding. Yet that which pleased him most was to stroll, crowned and sceptred, through the splendidly lighted halls of Herrenchiemsee and people the empty rooms with the great poets and princes of the past. With these, too, he was at home and every inch the king, King of the Kingdom of Beauty and of Dreams—of Chastity, too, for never once was the mystic music with which he flooded those mystic halls broken by the

discord of a woman's voice. His cousin had cured him of that. *Et voilà ce que c'est que l'Amour.*

After the episode with this lady the life of Ludwig of Bavaria was a long anachronism, but a very beautiful one, marred only by the insanity that overtook him in the end. That insanity was in the family. His brother is mad as a hatter, and his grandfather lost over Lola Montez the few wits that he had. Behind these people, back through the chronicles of the House of Wittelsbach, there are chapters choked with crime, scenes smeared with sin, a story of calamity singularly straight, one in which other descendants, notably the Empress of Austria and her son Rudolph, had their undoubted share. For the purposes of this paragraph it would be convenient to assume that there is a curse on the clan. And if there be, that curse is love. In any event, it is the cause of their dementia. But then, apart from gold, is not love the cause of every folly that has occurred since the days when, for Helen's sake, the war of the world was fought? Truly, when you come to sit down and think it over, or even, as we do, stand up and dictate, the panorama of un-

hallowed disasters that unrolls does not make one much in love with love.

Yet though, like gold, it has its defects; like gold, too, it has its charms. Every reputable writer has denounced it and disreputably enjoyed all he could get. To say one thing and mean something else happens to all, even to the best. But the main point about it, and which, as such, we have left to the last, is the fact that concerning it doctors disagree. That, however, is natural enough. Love has a hundred symptoms, a thousand phases. It may come at first sight—which does not mean second sight. It may come from propinquity and also from the lack of it. The less we see of people the more delightful they appear. It may come of curiosity, which is the instinct of self-improvement. It may come of sympathy, which is the pleasure we take in the unhappiness of someone else. It may come of antipathy, for in every affection there is the germ of hate. It may come of mutual attraction. That is very common. It may come of natural selection. That is very rare.

Natural selection presupposes a discernment that leads a man through mazes of women to one woman in particular, to the woman who to

him is the one woman in all the world, to the woman who has been awaiting him and who recognises him when he comes. And it is just because the process is exceptional that doctors disagree, husbands and wives also, sweethearts and swains as well, poets and princesses too. Therein lies the root of the disasters that it has given us a real pleasure to relate. It is, indeed, a pleasant subject. But it is one that would have perplexed Euclid, and for all we know to the contrary, doubtless did. The more abundantly it is written about the more abundant does ignorance appear. For love is one of those phenomena which elude exact knowledge. A huckster of phrases thought he summed it up in defining it as the Why and Wherefore of Creation. Another huckster nauseatingly labelled it the sweetest shape of pain.

Everything being possible, it may be either and even both. Yet studies and statistics have rather inclined us to the theory that, apart from pathological conditions, love is either the affection of somebody else or else the fusion of two egotisms, the contact of two epiderms, the tragedy of those that lack it, the boredom of those that don't, and in this country the prime incentive to matrimony, which also studies and

statistics have led us to regard as three months of adoration, three months of introspection, and thirty years of toleration, with the children to begin it all over anew. *Et voilà ce que c'est que l'Amour.*

VII

THE TOILET OF VENUS

BRUMMEL liked his smartness unperfumed. "The linen of a man of fashion smells, sir," said he, "but of the open." The remark, a paradox then, has become a platitude since. As with men of fashion, so with women. Cologne water has been abandoned to ladies' maids and extracts double-distilled to shop-girls. To-day the most modish perfume is health. The next best is a suspicion of orris. Occasionally one encounters a suggestion of lilacs that are far away. The farther away the better. In smart life these represent the gamut. Anything more florid jars. In Brummel's day, and during its many morrows, the use which fine people made of patchouli was nothing less than dissolute. They had a love for millefleurs which we can only qualify as depraved. The epoch has gone, thank fortune, and may it never return. It was a matter of taste, no doubt, but it was all

so bad. The farther back memory wanders the worse it gets.

Consider the lilies of the field! There is a spectacle simple and sedate. Its elements do not figure in the perfumery of Judæa. Said Solomon: "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi." A cluster being insufficient, he added a mountain of myrrh, a hill of frankincense, an orchard of pomegranates, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon. The beloved became a conservatory—sultry, sticky, and soporific at that, and yet, we assume, entirely symbolic. Even so the beloved was alluring beside the vision which Muhammad evoked.

Hell is certainly paved with women's tongues. But Paradise, as mapped in the Koran, is floored with musk. It is with musk that houris are garmented. That, however unnatural, is natural enough. Muhammad, afflicted with *hysteria muscularis*—the only disease, parenthetically, which ever founded a religion—intercepted in his hallucinatory trances, and afterward detained, reminiscences of anterior worship. In days when the world went slower the young altars of the old gods were splendid with aromatics. At the shrines of long ago, in the temples of

Bel, in the crypts of Memphis, in the sanctuaries of Jerusalem, everything sacred was scented. Perfumes, it was believed, not merely pleased the gods; it was believed that they were tokens of their presence. Witness Aphrodite. However humid her breast may be with the salt of the sea, always she brings with her a whiff of ambrosia. So it was with Isis. The atmosphere in which she dwelt was charged by her divinity with fragrance. In appealing to her perfume and prayer mounted conjointly, and the more readily because of the conjunction.

The circumstance is worth noting. It elucidates obscurities of Muhammad, of Solomon, too, and helps to an understanding of the real significance of perfumes. But we will come to that in a minute. Meanwhile we may offer a conundrum: What were the charms of Circe? Ovid told, but his work, like many another, was turned into palimpsests. There let it rest. We have something as good. It is a treatise by Apollonius, a historian of whom we know so little that it is idle to attempt to know less. Yet what we don't know of him he knew of Circe. The witcheries of the wicked enchantress were entirely apothecary. It was the old lady's habit to apply to each part of the body a

different variety of unguent. The effect, novel in itself, delighted Ulysses, and, surviving the years, became fashionable in less legendary life.

Smart Athenians perfumed the hair with marjoram and the brows with an essence of apples. The arms were rubbed with mint, the knees with ground ivy. Baccaris, an extract of crocus, was put on the soles of the feet, and rhubarb on the fingers. They used these things, others as well. They painted the face with white lead, the lips with alkanet, the eyelids with kohl, and the nails with henna. The recipes, regarded as common property, were inscribed on marble in the temples of Æsculapius. The custom is citable. Fine folk wished not merely to look fine; they wished everybody to look fine also.

The wish was not limited to them. It pre-occupied the legislature.

At that time a woman who presumed to be out of the fashion, whose peplon, for instance, did not hang right in the back, or whose general appearance was not modish, there and then became a disturber of the peace, and as such liable to a fine, which varied, with degrees of slatternliness, from ten to a thousand drachmæ. Those, indeed, were the good old days.

There were others, however, particularly in Rome, where individual smartness was loved as never before and, except sporadically, as never since. Perfumes there were not limited to the person. The tunics of men of fashion were elaborately scented. So, also, were their baths, their beds, their horses, their dogs, and the walls of their houses. Melinum was one of the odours most in favour. Made of quinces, it came in three forms—liquid, solid, and powdered. There were yet richer perfumes. One much affected in high life consisted of twenty-seven ingredients, and cost, in our money, about a hundred dollars a pound. Nothing earthly would induce us to have a grain of it about us.

Another scent was saffron. As an essence it streamed through entertainments. At dinners where guests lay, fanned by boys whose curly hair they used for napkins, a preparation of it was found serviceable in neutralising the fumes of wine. Perfumes then offered possibilities in debauches, in cruelty, too, with which, unhappily, we are unacquainted. Caligula spent a fortune on unguents. He waded in them. Such was the joy of Nero at the death of his wife that he had more incense burned than Arabia could reproduce in a decade. Heliogabalus asked a lot

of people to dinner, and from panels in the ceiling had such masses of aromatics fall on them that before they could escape they were smothered. We are not making this up. The carouse is down in Lampridus. It is true, he may have invented it; but that we doubt. Lampridus was not imaginative, and Helio-gabalus was. That painted boy, who looked like a dissolute girl, and who, to the Romans, contrived to be both emperor and empress, had perfumes that were poisons. He got them from the curious East, whence he came.

The odour of one of them perverted the imagination, stained the thoughts, and depraved the mind. It turned conceptions of wrong into right and made the unholy adorable. It set men mad and made women hide themselves in the Tiber. It smelled as purple looks. In certain seraglios and ceremonies of the Orient it is rumoured to be detectable still. But we must not believe every thing we hear. In any event, it is not used on Fifth Avenue. That, though, is a detail. The point is that there never was a place so scented as the splendid city of the Cæsars. Not merely did men, women, and animals come in for their share, but the victorious standards of the victorious legions, which dripped with blood,

dripped, too, with perfume. The purple sails of the jewelled galleys were perfumed. In the colossal delight of the amphitheatre, where, beneath a canopy of spangled silk, a thousand musicians answered the roar of beasts and the cries of the multitude with the kiss of flutes, the hum of harps, and the blare of brass, at stated intervals there rained from the terraces showers of saffron, of cinnamon, and myrrh. Those, too, may be catalogued among the good old days.

It was during them that Venus managed to be, if not at her best, not quite at her worst. In years subsequent and sedater her toilet became more substantial, yet we entertain a suspicion that what it gained in texture it lost in grace. The perfumes that she trailed through Rome were not lasting. They faded with the click-clack of her sandals. It took the Moors to detain them. The Moors invented a number of things—how to whip Spain, how to make rhymes, how to play checkers, how to give serenades, how to do algebra, how to set clocks, and how to extract and preserve perfumes by means of distillation.

The process was performed with an alembic, which means a still. But that bit of erudition need not alarm. It has a false air of learning

which is not in our line. We have no pedantic familiarity with this subject or, for that matter, with any other. We are able, at most, to recall that perfumery, as understood to-day, began just about then, and that the fragrance of it was first noticed when Salahaddin flooded the floor of Omar's mosque with rose-water.

The odour passed with the Crusaders through Europe. Its vogue was immediate. Venus promptly utilised it in her finger-bowl, where it must have been serviceable, for the fork had not yet come, and when it did was regarded as a piece of great foppery. But that, too, has a false air of learning which we despise. In order that we may not seem to know more than we do, we will just note that so grew the daintiness of the lady that presently she had perfumed gloves, perfumed candles, perfumed bellows, perfumed pillows, and with them, we take it, perfumed dreams. If the latter resembled the rest of her *batterie de cuisine*, they must have been nasty enough. They must have been heavy, cloying, and bitterly sweet. Perfumery she had, but not perfumes. Even so, she was better off than she had been for a long time past.

In those dismal ages society stank vilely. The

very select used balsams instead of baths. The less select used neither. In "Much Ado About Nothing" *Pedro* says of *Benedick*: "Nay, he rubs himself with civet." And the deduction follows: "The sweet youth's in love."

This, of course, occurred in days semi-fabulous and wholly barbaric. In a later and more neighbourly epoch taste ran to what was called the essence pot—"amber, musk, and bergamot, eau de chypre, eau de luce, sanspareil, and citron juice." The taste became a subject of legislation. A trifle over a century ago an Act of Parliament declared that "all women, of whatever age, rank, profession, or degree, that shall impose, seduce, and betray into matrimony any of His Majesty's subjects by the use of paint, false hair, false teeth, iron stays, bolstered hips, or scents, shall incur the penalty of the law in force against witchcraft and like misdemeanours, and the marriage, upon conviction, shall stand null and void."

And quite right, too. Divorce we have always regarded as the mother-in-law of invention, and we can imagine no better ground for separation than the use of scents. Beside them iron stays and bolstered hips are charming. In the hair of the Beloved—not Solomon's, but ours—there

is a fetching freshness. We like it best when blown by the wind of the ocean. The smell on her of brine and of seaweed is more captious to us than was musk to Muhammad. When from the woodlands she returns, her frock redolent of the breath of brooks, of the odour of acorns, and the clean, cool smell of under-grass grown overgreen, we could sit down and write—and even stand up and dictate—a sonnet.

The smoke of the small black shavings that come, or are supposed to come, from the Vuelta Abajo, endears her to us also. A pretty mouth seems to us a pretty place for a cigarette. The use of it by no means betokens the fast woman. Fast women try so hard to appear respectable that they would not smell of tobacco for a farm. It is a mistaken idea to the contrary which preserves middle-class femininity from its lure. We hope this paper will not enlighten them. We are not here to educate their taste. To pass from them to the Beloved: most does she imparadise the heart when on the saddle she has managed to accumulate the emanations of the fields and hedges over which she has shot. Beside her, then, a nosegay of the essences that bloom on Bond Street seem cheap and meretricious. On such occasions she sug-

gests nothing so much as a human flower—a jasmine in flesh and blood.

That is what we call perfume in its perfection. It has but one higher stage. Before entering it a prelude may be of use.

There are a baker's dozen of problems, all of which look very simple, and which it is conveniently supposed were solved long ago. So they were. But the solutions have not a leg to stand on. For instance there is the toilet of Venus. Ask any scientist why it is that with every evocation of the goddess come gusts of ambrosia, and if you pin him down he will give it up. Scholars are readier. They can cite Homer. But Homer is descriptive, not explanatory. Yet for every effect there is a cause. This is not an exception. Solomon intercepted it. So, too, did Muhammad. We who are less agile know Elysium, Heaven, and Paradise to be the same place with a different name. Ideas of it vary with peoples and prophets. But though creeds confuse, though they change, too, as climates do, there is one conception common to all. It is that humanity has fallen from a higher estate and that ideals are but reminiscences of what we once beheld when we were other than what we are.

Assuming the conception to be correct, we enter with it into a more intimate understanding of the toilet of Venus than science and scholarship have been able to provide. For with it, hand in hand, comes a clue to the problem of perfumes. However much the latter may be out of fashion now, they have their reason and their rhyme. Everything has. The purpose of centipedes and critics is not entirely clear. The purpose of jellyfish and bores is not obvious either. But they were not put here without an object. As with them, so with the rose. Its patent of nobility is to be useless. It charms, indeed, but it seems to have no other scheme of existence. In the lap of nature it lolls, lovely and enigmatic. But Solomon, who was a seer, and Muhammad, who was a medium, divined its meaning. Their joint love of perfume was due to an intuition that in the ethereal hereafter it is on the odours of flowers that spirits subsist.

It is for this reason that the young altars of the old gods were splendid with aromatics. It is for this reason that everything sacred was scented. It is for this reason, because, like ideals, perfumes are reminiscences of the divine. In an ancient geography it is written that

beyond Astomia dwell beings who live on the scent of the rose. Astomia should not be confounded with the Astoria. Beyond it means beyond the tomb. Even so, the customs of the next world are not suited to the Waldorf. When society was more primitive, and consequently nearer its anterior state, perfumes, however pungent, were permissible, and, for that matter, praiseworthy, too. To-day the Beloved no longer suggests a cluster of camphire. From Aphrodite, as she deigns to appear to us, every trace of ambrosia has gone. She smells of fresh cambric and fresh air. She is pretty as a peach and, parenthetically, just about as witty, but she doesn't go to the apothecary for unguents now. She perfumes, herself with health, occasionally with virtue. She leaves essences to maids, extracts to shop-ladies, and, unless she had a dictionary handy, she could not spell patchouli to save her life.

So do customs change, fashions, too, and with them the Toilet of Venus.

VIII

THE QUEST OF PARADISE

THERE are people who charm at sight. There are others who produce sites that charm. There are even some who do both. Dr Lucas is one of them. We never heard of him before, and already we have learned to love him. Dr Lucas is an associate of the Geological Survey. As such he has announced a grand discovery. He has succeeded in locating the Garden of Eden. For reasons sufficient to him, and therefore good enough for anybody, he designates Luzon as the spot. Here, or rather there, is the First Family's Midway Plaisance. Here, too, is not merely a grand discovery but a sort of national thanksgiving. In acquiring the Philippines we have annexed Paradise. What have the anti-imperialists to say to that?

The discovery is of a nature to interest them precisely as it must interest everybody; yet particularly, perhaps, Mr Thomas Cook and Mr

Baedeker. Should the site be accepted as exact, we assume without effort that one of these gentlemen will prepare round-trip tickets, and the other the obvious guide-book. The Story of the Fall, which Mr Baedeker is sure to intercalate among the usual Hints to Travellers, will, for many, have the force and flavour of a new scandal. The doctrine of Original Sin, expounded in the appendix, all conscientious Sunday editors will seize upon as a feature. It will be new to them also.

Yet the delights of the guide-book, however manifold, will pale beside the pleasures in store for the tourist. Fancy the sensations which the most satiated of globe trotters will experience on beholding a tree which is certified to be that of Good and Evil! Fancy, too, the travellers' tales of those who have vacated the Gates! Possibilities such as these are too good to be true. According to Moses, or, more exactly, according to scholastic interpretations of his statements on the subject, Paradise was situated in a garden of gold, of bdellium, and of onyx. Arminius put it in a clear conscience. Villon in the eyes of the well-beloved. Dr Lucas has put it on the map. There is the ideal, or rather, there is progress.

Others, though, have been as progressive. Consider, for instance, the Canaries. *Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen blumen?* There it is. According to ancient, yet not standard authorities, there, too, was Paradise. The Canaries are the Fortunate Isles, Iambulus says, or is said to have said, for really we have not read him, and probably could not if we tried, and would not bother to, anyway—however, Iambulus is reported to have stated that these islands were inhabited by a set of people who had elastic bones, bifurcated tongues, whose lives were a succession of sweetnesses, and who, when overtaken by age, lay on a perfumed grass that produced a voluptuous death. That must have been a long time ago. Perhaps, too, the story is not true. In any event, nothing of the kind is encounterable there now. Yet we might just as well have had these islands as the Philippines. Everything being possible, it may be that some day we shall. In which case those whom Dr Lucas' discovery does not satisfy may betake themselves to the Canaries instead.

Then, also, there is Venezuela. From the Gulf of Paria Columbus wrote loyally to Ferdinand and Isabella that just beyond was Paradise. He wrote not merely loyally, but

logically. In the neighbourhood were the enchantments of El Dorado. A trifle to the north were Bimini's Waters of Youth, and, more remotely, stretched Tlapallan, the Land of Colours.

That land of colours is Yucatan to-day. The enchantments of El Dorado have dissolved in the sultriness of Trinidad, and Bimini's Waters of Youth Ponce de Leon sought and failed to find in Florida. The latter we have, and many of us a few Palm Beach hotel bills by way of reminder. Over the others ultimately our flag will flaunt. In the quest of Paradise, therefore, we are by no means limited to Luzon. Yet though there is a trust in the matter there is no monopoly. Others have been quite free to pick and choose.

Some old chaps selected Avalon, where rapture was such that a year was a minute. We have not an idea where it can be, otherwise the location would not be withheld from our readers. But it is somewhere. So, also, is Ceylon, where a good bishop said every prospect pleases and only man is vile. So, too, is the Kingdom of Prester John, just beyond which other old chaps declared Paradise to be. Nor is this all. Theologians have placed Eden in Mesopotamia, travellers in Central Africa, ethnologists in

Atlantis, mythologists in Limuria, philosophers in Utopia, and litterateurs at the Pole—which, to be as cosmopolitan as the rest of them, constitutes, we think, a real embarrassment of choice.

Even so, it did not embarrass Sven Hedin. Last year—or was it the year before?—he dismissed them all, and, quite as definitely as Dr Lucas put his finger on Luzon, this gentleman indicated Janaidar.

Janaidar is a city in the uplands of Asia, to which the Kirghiz look and pray as they pass. Perched on a peak of the Pamirs, provided with flowers that never wither, with delights that never end, with songs that never cease, it surges above the barren plains a mirage of terrestrial bliss. Dr Hedin tried to ascend the height on which it is set. Being mortal, he failed. It is as well, perhaps. He has an illusion left. So have we. Always and everywhere there is an abode of bliss. But on condition that it is treated as the Kirghiz treat Janaidar, that it is looked up to, prayed to, and then passed by.

Through an inability to imitate the Kirghiz, or, perhaps, because they never heard of them, others have attempted artificial ascents. Among these is Baudelaire. With nothing but haschisch

for ladder the ascent was effected; he was there, living in uninterrupted delights, listening to harmonies no mortal ever heard before, contemplating landscapes of amber and emerald, perspectives the colour of dream, and with them, perhaps, the lost arcana, the secrets of the enigmæ of the universe, the science that Plutonian cataclysms engulfed, the recitals of the genesis and metamorphosis of the supernal, the chronicles of the forgotten relations of nature and man.

Another was De Quincey. In the hallucinations of the glass of "laudanum negus, warm, without sugar," which he used for ascent, there were infinite cavalcades, the undulations of tumults, the catastrophes of mighty dramas, choruses of passion, trepidations of innumerable fugitives, tempests of features, forms, and farewells, shuttled by sudden lambiencies, by the consonance of citterns and clavichords, by Æolian intonations, by revelations of power and beauty, by pomps and glories, until a vault, opening in the zenith of the far blue sky, showed a shaft of light that ran up for ever through millennia, through æons; and up that shaft his spirit mounted, mounted, mounted ever farther yet, until peace slept upon him as dawn upon the sea.

In addition to haschish and opium other ladders have been used. Among them mescal is citable—not the agave preparation, but a plant which yields a substance brown and bitter, and of which the effects resemble Indian hemp.

Mescal is much in vogue among the Tarahumari, a tribe of Mexican Indians, to whom the plant is a god, approachable only after fastidious rites, the body perfumed with cophal, the heart entirely devout. And no wonder. For, properly placated, the god conducts the worshipper to a series of visions in which he is beckoned into Paradise and then shown out—provided he has absorbed the proper dose.

That dose we have personally lacked the opportunity to absorb, but if we may believe everything we hear—and we are always most anxious to—Mr Havelock Ellis has. With it he encountered a vast field of golden jewels, perfumes also, on which flowerful shapes convoluted into gorgeous butterflies, gyrated in loops of flame, and performed skirt dances before him, providing him with living pictures, or, rather, what he, with perhaps a higher conception of the possibilities of language, calls “living

arabesques." In the background were, he noted, architectural sweetmeats in the Maori style—whatever style that may be—enhanced "with the moucharabieh work of Cairo."

This sort of thing continued for hours, until, indeed, Mr Ellis went to bed, when he became, as he expresses it, greatly impressed by the "red, scaly, bronzed, and pigmented appearance of his limbs," particularly—and strange to say—whenever he was not gazing directly at them.

Dissatisfied with the result, he experimented on a friend, to whom he amicably distributed an overdose, and who with some pathos relates that thereupon he had a series of paroxysms which made him feel as if he were about to give up the ghost. He enjoyed a sense of speedy dissolution, accompanied, and presumably accentuated, by an entire inability to resist, yet quickly followed by an acuter apprehension that one of his eyes had turned into a pool of dirty water in which millions and millions of minute tadpoles were afloat. Then he, too, was gratified with a skirt dance of arabesques that arose, descended, palpitated, and slid, for which, however, he was presently punished by a procession of sudden frights. His left leg became solid, his body

immaterial, his arms impalpable, the back of his head emitted flames, to his mouth came the burn of fire, to his ears the buzz of bees, interrupted by the impression of skin disappearing from the brow, of dead flesh, of hot chills, and, finally, of a grinning skull.

It is into such byways that the quest of Paradise may lead one. Yet there are others, notably those disclosed by drink. Byron used that guide, so did Poe, so did de Musset. Under the influence of the Yellow Fay, whose name is *Eau de Vie* and should be *Au Delà*, they left the world, crossed the frontiers of the possible, and in a swift pursuit of larger flowers, rarer perfumes, pleasures unenjoyed, passed from new horizons into visions brutally beautiful, wholly solid, dreamless and real, where, fairer than the desire of a fallen god, the Muse stood, her arms outstretched.

It is a wonderful journey, but the landscapes it unveils are not suited to common clay. There are colours there to which the rest of us are blind, melodies to which we are deaf, the white assumption of realised ideals. Such things are not for ordinary man. The summit scaled, or even attempted, instead of resplendent perspectives, instead of the pulsations of higher hopes, the

savours of life unto life, the odours and foretastes of immaculate joy, there is stupor when there is not horror, delirium when there is not death, Purgatory instead of Paradise. It is a great place, though, for men who want to drown their sorrows, and always will be until they learn that sorrows know how to swim.

In an effort to forget, or, rather, not to remember, that the end of life is darkness and the font of it pain, persons more fastidious have turned to love. But that also has its defects. In the smart set it is a game, and a very pretty one too, only when you are old enough to play it properly you are too old to play it at all. In which respect it is inferior to bridge whist. Platonism is much better. The trouble, though, with that arrangement is that either the party of the first part loses her head or the party of the second part loses his temper. Neither result is conducive to happiness, and happiness is but a synonym for Paradise.

Happiness is what we think it is, but only when what we think it is what we have not got. Love is refreshing and wealth delightful. But they do not bring happiness. Even golf may fail. Matrimony too, for that matter. The happiness of matrimony is not, however, a

subject that may be lightly talked away. There are and have been, and presumably always will be, a number of marriages that are delicious. Yet none is perfect. But, then, does perfection exist?

Personally, we have heard matrimony defined as one woman more and one man less. The definition seemed to us inadequate. Then, too, it is a long time since the noose matrimonial ceased to be news. Yet that noose we have heard praised for the opportunities which it affords for the development of the emotions known as unselfish. Certainly it is highly chastening. But chastened people have no individuality. The big bugs of history were thorough-paced egotists. Cæsar at the Rubicon, Napoleon at Marengo, Carnegie at the Steel deal, did not care a rap for a soul save themselves. Do we not honour them for it? It is of such stuff that greatness comes. But, like matrimony, like golf, and bridge whist, greatness is not happiness. When Alexander was tramping India in search of the sight that Dr Lucas has found in Luzon, an ordinary person presumed to tell him that he was on the wrong road. "The right way," said the person, "is humility." We

have tried the path and discovered, just as Columbus discovered in the Gulf of Paria, that Paradise lay beyond.

"We are all born in Arcadia," said Schiller, who omitted to add that we emigrated at once. But the idea is sound. We are born with a belief in Paradise. The quest of it fills our dreams. The delays in getting there furnish our nightmares. Yet of all those who have sought it, nobody has ever got there after the age of forty, or, we may hasten to add, before.

Beautiful as an uncommitted sin, it stretches far away, too far, indeed, for laggard steps like ours. It is not in Luzon, as Dr Lucas has announced. It is not in the Fortunate Isles, as the ancients thought. The artificial substitute does not pay, the Biblical Plaisance has ceased to be. In the twentieth century there is no such place.

These premises admitted, there should be somethin to take its place, and there is. An epicure provided it. He called it Contentment. Given that, and the possessor can dispense with Paradise every day in the year. The factors are twofold. The first is health; the second indifference. The conjunction of these little things

does not produce Elysium, but it steers one clear of Hades. Anyone who expects more than that is too good for the good things, and particularly for the bad things—which are often better—with which this world is bestrewn.

IX

TRUFFLES AND TOKAY

LITERATURE used to be a battlefield. To-day it is a restaurant. A virtuous writer no longer pinks a rival; he caters to the public. The food is cheap, easy of digestion and as easily prepared. The equipment necessary for its production is readily acquired, and profitable when obtained. All the cook needs is an absence of imagination and a fountain pen. Given these condiments, success is sure.

That is natural. One touch of stupidity makes the world kin. Considered as a nation, we are, of course, perfectly splendid. The glory that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome, are not in it with us. We have only to look at the papers to be convinced of that. The pæans of our progress are as deafening as leaded type can make them. The celerity with which we breed plutocrats is exceeded only by the servility with which we cultivate them. In the export of

heiresses the manufactories of Europe cannot touch us. Before our professional beauties the Peris of Paradise slink abashed. We produce everything, including panics, and raise all things except masterpieces.

That, also, is natural. We are, perhaps, masterful, certainly mercenary, but not metrical. The land of the free is the home of progress, yet not of poets. In years when the world went slower poets were regarded as butlers of the gods. Their ambrosia was received with genuflections. In their nectar was the divine afflatus. The custom has been abrogated. Barring Mammon, the gods have gone. There is not a trace of the afflatus left. Our climate does not agree with it. Our climate does not agree with poets either. It induces in them radiating chloroformania. Instead of genuflections they are greeted with yawns. Their nectar obtains every kind of reception except consumption. Their titles have been examined. It has been found that in descending the years they have degenerated from butlers into apothecaries. Their ambrosia is a drug on the market. In a wide-awake, democratic country like this that sort of thing doesn't do. The vocation, as a consequence, creates not yawns and ridicule

merely, but indignation. "Who is that chap?" a man in some misery asked us recently. "He is a young poet," we answered. "I hate young poets," was his reply. And yet, as Gautier, with a charming affectation of naïvete, remarked, an inability to write in verse can scarcely be considered as constituting a special talent.

Perhaps, however, it may. An inability to write anything but cheques is the smart thing here. A pilgrim from Paris noted that we have developed a hundred religions and but a single sauce. That sauce, surmounting our kitchens, has assimilated our flummeries, our festivities, our frescoes, and fiction. Here and there the sameness of it is relieved by a touch of originality. But the touch is sporadic. The blue ribbon is scarce. Hence the rarity of masterpieces.

The cuisine of the latter differs from current cookery. In Milan the education of a ballet girl begins at the age of six. Until she effects her debut she works ten hours a day. The young of both sexes who aspire to be *cordons bleu* should begin a little earlier and work harder yet. By way of *batterie de cuisine* there is the dictionary. Spelling they may leave to their problematic proof-reader; grammar too. No grammarian ever wrote a thing that was fit to read. They

need not bother with style either; geniuses often write badly, and so much the better for them. Besides, style is easy enough to manipulate when you know how, and seems easier still when you don't. But to the *chef en herbe* words must have no secrets. He must know how to toss them as a juggler throws knives. He must be able to plant them in such fashion that they will explode like bombs before the reader's eyes. If necessary, they must enable him to have an attack of hysterics on paper.

After the conquest of the dictionary, the scullion who has anything to fricassee will know how to prepare it. Yet then should an idea, however complex, a vision, however apocalyptic, surprise him without words to convey it, he may just as well take off his apron. He lacks, not necessarily the elements of success—on the contrary—but the gastronomies that distinguish the first-class cook. He may stew succotash by the pail, yet never truffles and tokay. On the other hand, should chance enable him to catch Inspiration in the dark, should fortune assist him in throwing her down, and talent aid him in filching a masterpiece from her glittering corsage, he may be intimately convinced that it was the wrong

party he met should that masterpiece prove popular. A book that pleases no one may be poor. The book that pleases everyone is detestable.

To young ladies of cognate aspirations the same course of sprouts is requisite. But with no matrimony in it. An authoress should not wed unless she can marry a publisher. A publisher is a handy person to have about the house. Failing the chance at one, in no circumstances should she even for a moment consider the possibility of taking any form of husband not equally serviceable and quite as lack-lustre. Look at Marie Corelli. The heroes of whom she has delivered herself would fill a ten-acre lot. And yet for the hand of that delicious, bare-back, sawdusted circus-rider of the fountain pen, princes have wooed unavailingly. And look at Ouida. The types of manhood that she has produced are quasi-divine; and yet, though wooed too, neither has she been won. Then there is, or rather there was, George Sand. Through an early page of her career there wandered the dissolute Greuze of literature, whose name is Alfred de Musset. Through a later chapter there passed the Apollo of impeccable accords, whose name is Chopin. As neither happened to be in the publishing busi-

ness she used them both for copy, and married a philistine.

These statistics are not voluminous, but they have the superior merit of luminousness. They show that princesses of the pen who do not remain single prefer commonplace consorts. And that, after many vigils and much communion, we regard as quite right. It is an axiom in law that fighting cocks should be kept apart. It is an axiom in letters that epigrams from the other end of the table are provoking. It is an axiom in lyrics that, however delightful the exchange of repartee and kisses may be, neither is conducive to the production of fiction, trite or thrilling.

Young gentlewomen have, then, a choice between living novels and writing them. The former condition is to be preferred. The revels of romance may be roseate, or the reverse, but matrimony is no child's play. Besides, young gentlewomen should, perhaps, content themselves with continuing to be. The moment they cease to shirk every duty in that sphere of life to which it pleased God to call them, their charm becomes so pernicious that they incite to bigamy—a crime of which the penalties have been summarised as two mothers-in-law, or at-law, in the discretion of the judge. But

as the subject is momentous, let us consult the authorities. Here, for instance, is Nietzsche. According to him, man should be reared for the vocation of warrior and woman for the warrior's recreation. Now, if she work, how can she be recreative? And here is Dr Watts: "Satan," he says, "finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." The conversation of a lady who lacks the leisure to be mischievous is bound to be very dull. Then, also, wives that write have not time to argue with their husbands, and when a woman ceases to quarrel she ceases to love. In view of all which, it seems to follow that girls cannot combine matrimony and masterpieces—at the same time at least—and young gentlemen cannot either. Eagles, poets, and kings must—and will—circle alone. By the same token, all dealers in the ideal are better off by themselves, or, at a pinch, less worse off with transient flirtations than permanent families.

There are reasons for all things. We have several for this, and may find another. Matrimony presupposes happiness. It usually takes it out at that. But there is the general theory. Assuming it to be valid, happiness dulls the brain. As such, it is to be avoided. It is only

when authors are absolutely miserable that the wretches can do themselves justice. And even were matrimony, through its chastening effects, to induce that result, it is open to a yet graver objection.

To stir the wits, to make ink flow in floods and the pen acrobatic, there is nothing like solitude. No one not in the business can understand how populous it is. No one not in the trade can understand how loquacious its phantoms become. They have their defects. They poison you for the realities of life. None the less, to be worth his syndicate an author must evoke them. He must play with hallucinations as Mithridates did with drugs. But he must play alone.

Literature—when not a restaurant—is a divinity, and a jealous one. She suffers no other worship. She forces you to shut every extraneous desire, ambition, and inclination into cages where, now and then, for the distraction of the thing, you may go and see how they are. But you must go alone. Take a companion in the shape of a wife or, worse yet, a husband, and there is an end to the high hallucinatory fever that she provides. There also is a farewell to that untrammelled freedom which is the pundit's

natural heath. The lives of great sages all remind us that in their sagacity they were too sagacious to marry. The lives of great poets all remind us that, uniformly married, they uniformly wished they were not.

These are the reasons that we promised. Here is the other that we didn't. Should matrimony occur, the party of the second part, being a mere mortal, will, like other mere mortals, love society, will affect to say, as others have, that it is a bore to be in it, and feel, as others do and will, that it is a tragedy not to.

Yet in society how many dealers in the ideal are there? There is the Duchess of Sutherland. There is the Queen of Roumania. But these ladies are superior women, and superior women, being always long-winded, are able to do double duty. Apart from them, magnificent examples are few. They exist, however, yet not on the list of smart people. The latter are charming, but they do not read; and, as for writing, good Lord! possessing, as they do, the ability to write cheques, they fancy that therein is all the law and most of the profits. What is worse, they are right. In the way of literature anything further would be a surfeit.

Society is hard labour. So also is fiction. It

is, an old troubadour remarked, a toil at which galley-slaves would balk. One form of hard labour is supersufficient. An added variety would do up a football team. Hence it is that society is not literary, and the literary are not social. Of all pursuits this is the most difficult. The sculptor has his chisel, the musician his piano, the painter his brush. The novelist has but his brain. The sculptor, the musician, the painter have instruments to second them. The novelist is the instrument and the instrumentalist. He chisels the impalpable, attunes the inaudible, and paints the unseen. Or at least he did before he was submerged in the swirl of succotash that gushes from the sculeries of the department stores.

What will become of that deliciousness, and of anterior messes quite as delightful, the giant library now in process of construction on Fifth Avenue one of these days will tell. If we may believe all we hear—and that is not always a pleasure—this library is to be a very fine place. In some splendour and entire spaciousness Error will sleep there side by side with Truth. How much of the one and how little of the other its galleries will contain, speculative spiders may decide. But one thing is certain. The best books

will not be there. Precisely as the prettiest women are always those whom we have yet to meet, so are literature's most fascinating productions still unwritten.

If, as is generally suspected, the value of a work consists more in what it suggests than in what it says, the most uplifting books will not be in that library either. There is, for instance, the Book of Nature, a treatise that all philosophers begin and none of them finish. There is also the Book of Destiny, which all thinkers consult and none can construe. Then there is the Book of Love, whose scroll age cannot scan and youth cannot fathom. Finally, there is the Book of Life, of which the pages vanish as you turn them.

These books will not be found on Fifth Avenue. In their stead there will be an acre of information on everything that it is easiest to forget, another acre of everything that it is useless to remember, ton after ton of rubbish that none but the authors and their enemies could be hired to look at, ton after ton of solemn lies that have survived only because Death has ignored them, ton after ton of defunct theories, of demised ideas, of deceased lore, and derelict science—with here and there

a few baskets of truffles, a few bottles of tokay, a few flowers of real literature, of which the wit and wisdom can never die.

For the rest of the cemetery our hopes are slim. We foresee dimly, yet surely, an hour when Posterity will dump the lot in a dust-bin and put a *Hic jacet* on it all—put it, we say, yet providing, of course, that she takes the trouble, and that in moments of faithlessness we rather doubt. And the reason, if complex, is clear. In the last fifty years, particularly in the last twenty, and more especially in the last five, literature has held a continuous show. Authors have spawned copy, publishers have belched books, and novelists have pyramided, remorselessly.

The entertainment has been diverting, but to call it enduring is another guitar. According to statistics there are produced in the United States sixty books a day, or two and a half every hour, and what more could anyone ask? Except, indeed, those who are ambitious to be known. For in that flood is the bankruptcy of Fame. So many claims has the lady on her that she needs must fail through sheer inability to pay her debts.

Without pretending to know more than we

do, it is easy to predict that this sort of thing cannot go on forever. The production of succotash is not a misdemeanour. The love of light yet heavy reading no jurist has codified into crime. The sale of stupidities under the name of stories is at best, or at worst, but a question of taste, however poor that taste may be. Yet nothing is constant but change. Across this swirl of dish-water there is passing a transverse stream.

We lack the space, which is a detail, for we also lack the art, to picture that stream as it deserves. But two aspects of it we may indicate. One consists in the fact that those of us whose lives are not devoted to fame are devoted to fun. Another lies in the multiplication of telephones, the increasing facility of communication, the coming abolition of time, and the sequestration of space.

It has been the absence of these very things that in the leisurely past has been most conducive to the production of poppycock. People nowadays have not so much time to spare. In the future they will have less. In the next generation, what with air-ships, telectroscopes, and interplanetary news, they will have none—or rather none for the light yet heavy reading of to-day.

Literature then will be electric. Instead of fat books stuffed with nauseous phraseology there will be brief pages of brilliant ideas. Instead of padding their wares authors will aim to say as much as possible in the fewest possible words. When that day comes the models of literary excellence will not be the long and windy sentences of accredited bores, but ample brevities, such as the "N" on Napoleon's tomb, in which, in less than a syllable, an epoch, and the glory of it, is resumed. That is the kind of cutlet the restaurant of the future will provide, and Fame will halo those who serve it quickest with truffles and tokay.

X

THE ENCHANTED CARPET

THE beauty of Az Zahra a congress of poets in active collaboration would be impotent to depict. Az Zahra was the palace of the Caliphs of Cordova. Forty thousand men worked at it ceaselessly for forty years. To-day not a trace of its enchantments remains.

There have been other bewilderments almost yet not quite as witching. Nero devised a residence so ineffably charming that on the day of reckoning may it outbalance a few of his sins! About it were shimmering porticos, glittering avenues, green savannahs, forest reaches, the call of bird and deer. Within were domes of sapphire, floors of malachite, crystal columns, and red-gold walls. It has crumbled.

Before the peacock throne of the Great Mogul there was an inscription that ran: "There is a Paradise. And it is this. And it is this." Of that paradise the legend alone endures. The en-

ticements of Dar Sargenu are rumoured to have exceeded those of Eden. They have evaporated. Trumpets of triumph woke Sardanapalus from the splendour of dreams to settings yet more splendid. Like the dreams, the settings have faded. Beneath Cyclopean arches, in matchless magnificence, Belsarazzur lounged and laughed. The arches have fallen, the magnificence has gone. At any evocation of Bel's Home of the Height the pens of archæologists have spluttered. Bel has vacated the skies, his earthly tenement has fallen. The sumptuousness in which Semiramis dwelt exceeds the powers of prose. The lady has dwindled into myth and the sumptuousness with her. Mounting upward with the stream of life and light the memory of the imperial palace at Byzance surges—a gorgeous vision. By comparison Versailles becomes an eyesore and Windsor a blur.

For sheer loveliness Az Zahra beat all these places hollow. It was a fairyland that would have thrown the architects of the Great Mogul's peacock paradise into stupors of admiration. Beside it Nero's surprising construction would have looked quite squalid. If a surmise be worth a line of type, we may assume that even the gorgeous vision of Byzance would have

slunk from it outdazzled. And there, one day, or it may be one night, a caliph stood and smiled.

Well he might. Before him was one of those jasmines in flesh and blood which used to grow on the Guadalquivir. And smiling, he lassoed the girl again and again with rope after rope of pearl. But even in fairyland, even in Az Zahra, caliphs had counsellors. This prince had his. They were prudent persons, and they represented to him that the lassoing was too lavish. These representations the caliph treated as cobwebs. "You are just like everyone else," he remonstrated; "you put a lot of value on things that have none." Then he mused a moment. "Tell me," he continued, "what are pearls good for except to punctuate the prettiness of a pretty girl?"

The syllogism, propounded in unanswerable Arabic, the counsellors were insufficiently casuistic to refute. Moreover, they were perhaps struck by the profundity or the truth it contained. The pearl is sacred to prettiness. Personally, we prefer the opal. The opal is a pearl with a soul. But opals are not *jeune-fillesque*. The pearl is. Vishnu could find nothing better for his daughter. Cæsar ransacked Britannia to find enough for the long line of young

women whom he had on his list. Nero was less thoughtful. He used to toss them—the pearls, not the young women—about the room. Heliogabalus liked them best powdered into pepper. Cleopatra preferred hers in a cocktail.

The possibility of that entirely vulgar performance has been doubted. But the dissolution of a pearl can be effected, though the flavour is reported to be less appetising than vermouth. And naturally. The pearl is a disease. A mortal one, too, in this respect, that it dies. It is only the jewel that does die. Diamonds, for instance, live for ever. One might say they have always lived. They count, like light, among the first created things. Generated in flame before the earth was cool, they preceded the primal monera. Pearls, on the other hand, are charming accidents, and, parenthetically, the only ornament that nowadays a man can decently wear. Balzac understood that fact very thoroughly. Previously, Buckingham had dripped jewels in a promenade through the Louvre. Previously, too, Richelieu had dazzled Vienna with a satrap's suite. Previously, as well, *les grands seigneurs* made themselves multi-coloured as quetzals. Adornment has been the fashion. But in Balzac's day fashion

had changed. It was much simpler, yet not entirely severe. Then it so fell about that one evening Balzac appeared at the opera with a stick, of which the handle blazed with gems. The glare of it drew the attention of the entire house. It was barbaric. It was more—it was unique. It was something else, too—it was a lesson. Apart from the stick Balzac was not adorned. The other men present were. On the morrow they stripped the jewels from their fingers and the trinkets from their shirts. Anteriorly gentlemen had been known by their dress; since then they have been known by their address. That is quite as it should be, were it not that in speech, as in costume, they have, in forcing the note, become entirely lacklustre. There is modern progress.

We have not a word against it. But if our summary has been serviceable it will have shown that splendour has departed. This we regret. We prefer silk to flannels, velvet to tweed. Had fortune sufficiently favoured us we would wade in jewels. We see nothing distressing in Buckingham's promenade through the Louvre. Were we able we would eclipse Richelieu's entry into Vienna. Merely for the manner in which Nero lodged himself we forgive every crime he com-

mitted. Sardanapalus is our patron saint. It may be—though we doubt it—that he was wickeder than Heliogabalus; but what of it? He was magnificence made man. Byzance is rumoured to have been the sewer of every sin, yet such was its beauty that it is the canker of our heart that we could not have lived there. By way of compensation we are treated to certain conveniences and equally certain ugliness. Cities grow less uncomfortable and more hideous day by day. We live in a land of ready-made clothes, in an epoch that cant has sterilised and snobbery debauched. The stage is as mediocre as life. Even the Muse has fled. In lieu of the glare of genius there are antiseptic preparations, and automobiles instead of art. Only in Nature and the convulsions of her does splendour endure.

Nature, though convulsive, is curiously cautious. She possesses a sort of a stock in trade of which her supply is uniform. That stock is energy. She transforms it, transmutes it, and transposes it. But never does she suffer a speck of it to get away. She may store it in microbe or man, in sporules or stars, but on to it all she holds very tight.

These premises accepted, it follows that if

splendour has vacated this neighbourhood it must be somewhere else. The pity is we cannot stalk it. And yet, why not? In the Arabian Nights there is a story about an enchanted rug. You had but to get on it, and presto! it carried you wheresoever you willed. That rug has been regarded as fabulous. It was, perhaps, woven of the imagination, but imagination can do as well to-day. All it needs is a foothold. Lacking that, a footnote. Here is one about Mars. It says that we can see the canals there, and sooner or later we shall see the streets.

Seeing is one thing, hearing is another. But recent experiments have induced the idea that we shall not merely see the streets but talk with the citizens. The idea may seem fantastic, yet it is the charm of certain ideas that beginning as fancies they end as facts. In this instance the idea is to telephone along a shaft of light. That is simple enough. Sound that can be projected a mile can be projected a million miles. It can be projected to the ends of space, if ends there are. Assuming, then, the possibility of such projection, and there is the enchanted rug.

On it we may proceed after splendour, and

presently we shall stalk it, too. Mars is many a kalpa our senior. In science and sapience, manners and modes, she is, as such, in a position to give us points. There must be forces she has mastered of which we know nothing, senses she has cultivated of which we are unaware, problems she has solved which to us are mysteries, and with them refinements and ideals unimagined here.

Granting, then, the possibility of communication, and there would be not merely the pleasure but the profit of learning from her pundits the history of time, of receiving from her erudites the charts of space and of flirting through the telescope with her pretty little girls. And who knows but that in putting two heads, or rather two worlds, together, interplanetary communication may result in interplanetary trips, that we shall visit Mars, that the Maritians will visit us, that there will be transsidereal elopements, marriages, divorces, and, in their triple train, romances and tragedies such as no local mortal ever dared to dream before.

That possibility, however suggestive, is trivial beside another it evokes. Mars, though our senior, is an inferior planet. The superiority of

planets and of their inhabitants is in direct proportion to their distance from the sun.

In accordance with this proposition—which all self-respecting novelists have adopted—the inhabitants of Mercury may be represented as human hyenas, those of Venus as commonplace brutes, the inhabitants of this world as uninteresting prisoners, those of Mars interesting poets, while the denizens of the distant spheres possess attributes of increasing perfection and enjoy conditions of supernal delight.

If then we, in our inferiority, are once able to ring up Mars, it will be found that long since Mars has been able to connect with Jupiter, the latter with Saturn, and so on to the Postmortem; and there is the circuit complete. Given, then, communication, and the romances and tragedies that may result sink into nothingness beside the opulence to be.

We shall know then, not merely where our early splendour has gone, but what splendour really is. Everything being possible, we may discover that it consists not in the manipulation of magnificence, the multiplication of masterpieces, the sumptuousness of settings, the thrones and diadems of the elect, but in the spectacle of

other worlds and the junkets we shall take there.

This idea has a false appearance of originality which we hasten to disclaim. It is old as the Sphinx. It is older. We know to-day that that monstrous curiosity was disinterred ages ago from beneath masses of sand under which it must have brooded interminably. But the meaning of it was so clear that Egypt adopted it for a crest. The claws of a reptile, the wings of a bird, the body of a beast, a human head, and there, before Darwin, before history, by a civilisation that has left no other souvenir, in traits great and grave the descent of man was told.

There remained his ascent. Above the Sphinx Egypt sent circling the Phoenix. The one expounded the mystery of life, the other the secret of death. That secret is reincarnation. "Shall I believe in it?" a youngster asked Voltaire. "Believe in it?" the ogre shouted, "believe in it by all means. There is nothing more poetic." Nor is there. It has a defect, however. It explains everything. It explains why some of us are rich and some are poor, why some are smart and many are not. It explains the reason of joys and sorrows, the cause of smiles and tears. It explains these things, others too, and very

simply, on the ground that this life, which is the refuse of many deaths, has acquired merits and demerits, in accordance with which are punishments and rewards. It explains everything so fully that it leaves you nothing to do but to bore yourself to extinction. That is its defect. Here is its charm. It sends the reincarnated junketing to spheres where life is larger than it can be here. It does more. In weaving a garland of migrations that stretches throughout the universe it sows our seed in every world and marries our memoirs with that of the sky.

There is the enchanted rug again, and there-with a quality of splendour so resplendent that beside it the witcheries of Az Zahra are reduced to mud pies. The main difficulty about it consists in the obvious fact that it is all too devilish good to be true. Any entertainment of it is comparable only to fancying that an uncle whom you never had has left you a billion he never possessed. Dreams are exhilarating, but not exact.

Yet if splendour be not stalkable in other spheres it is not to be quarried here. This world has done with it. It is one of the platitudes of philosophy that history repeats itself; history does nothing of the kind. The one deduction

deducible from its divagations proves that nothing is constant but change.

In the change of things the world has deteriorated. Artistically it is bankrupt. Ethically it is nothing to boast of. Ambitions have veered, tendencies altered. Heredity, environment—the influence of snobbery and its sister cant—have modified manners and sugared speech. But appetites have been left unaffected. Eliminate the penal code and we should be assisting now at the frank freedom the past beheld—with the difference that the settings would be less sumptuous and the architecture more trite. In but one thing has the world improved. One is a great many. Scientifically there has been a quintuple discount on everything that was. There is no telling how far science may advance nor yet into what wonderlands its enchanted rug may take us. In order, then, that we may not seem to know more than we do we will not attempt to prophesy. Besides, there is an old adage that the future sits in the lap of the gods. Or does it not lie there? As often as not it has promised most falsely.

It may be, therefore, that science, on which we all count so much, may turn and cheat us. It may be that our most intoxicating dreams, re-

incarnation, and interstellar trips, will be recognised as delirium. But if our proposition be sound, and nothing is constant but change, then from the coil of things other perspectives will beckon. Said Baudelaire: "*Pour trouver du nouveau plongeons dans le néant.*" The rug is more convenient. Borne on its arabesques, a condition of affairs is disclosed in which love will be regarded as a disease; wealth as a disaster; beauty as a horror; genius as stupidity; magnificence, madness, and originality vulgar. It will be wicked to be witty; righteous to be dull. The aim of life will be the attainment of complete colourlessness, and the ideal entire nullity.

The perspective may seem remote. From our rug it looks very neighbourly. The sun of splendour set long since. The dawn of nullity is breaking.

Salvation, if salvation there be, lies solely in extraneous succour. Precisely as dynasties are rejuvenated by fresher blood, so may humanity yet be reclaimed by superterrestrial conceptions. On the possibility of these conceptions we have already touched, yet theoretically merely, for the sake of their dreamlike beauty. To their support Mr Tesla not long

since brought something more substantial. He brought a fact. Mr Tesla announced that he had been favoured with a message from another sphere. Personally, we did not presume to doubt him. But his brother scientists assumed an attitude of incredulity more or less impolite. That was to be expected. In the announcement of any novelty there is something curiously insulting to those labouring in the vineyards where that novelty, or the announcement of it, appears.

Yet we need not bother over that. Since Mr Tesla has received a message there is no reason, why he should not reply, no reason either, why communication should not result, nor yet why we should not learn what fashions are in vogue in the upper circles of the universe, and what customs the smart sets of the best planets observe. Thereupon society, being innately snobbish, will proceed to follow suit, the dawn of nullity will break to pieces, and an era of such general gorgeousness ensue as shall make Sardanapalus hide his diminished ghost. In short, even in the limits of this paper there are no limits to the joys in store — provided, of course, that the message to Mr Tesla did not reach him when journeying on an enchanted rug.

XI

THE GOLDEN CALF

NINON DE L'ENCLOS wore her wrinkles on her heels. How she managed it she never told. The secret of her smartness evaporated with her. The secret of contemporary smartness is less clever and more clear.

It consists of three things. One is youth. There are belles and beaux who are no longer young. They are belles and beaux in their own imagination. Imagination is not a prerequisite. Youth is—so, too, is coin—and there is another little thing, entirely atmospheric, which is as difficult to acquire as it is to describe. We have heard a rumour that in Bloomsbury it is known as the *je ne sais quoi*. The meaning of the phrase is beyond us. That may be due to the accent. In Belgravia, though the accent is encounterable, the phrase never is. People there either possess the little thing or they don't. When they don't they are bounders. Returning now to that which a certain familiarity with the classics enables us to call our

muttons: given youth and money, no one need despair of the other. Old people, however rich, can't acquire it. Poor people, however young, can't either. The two things must beat as one. The high regard in which they are held, a certain familiarity with archæology enables us to catalogue as antediluvian. Always has youth been adored, always has money been worshipped. Between them they have managed to monopolise the attention of every drawing-room, prehistoric, pagan, and polite. Beauty and brains may be — and have been — talked away, but never money. However obtained, it is holy. Virtue and vice have been — and always will be — climatic, geographic, relative at that, but youth is unquestionable. There it is, and where it is there, too, is a great stirring of the affections.

Affections are just like fashions: they come and go. By the same token, what is smart to-day will be shabby genteel to-morrow. The only things for ever modish are youth and money. To the list we might add death. Death, though, has its disadvantages. So, alas, has life. Uncertain as Wall Street and false as an obituary, its obvious defect is its brevity. But the obvious is misleading. It is not life

that is brief, it is youth. And what is youth without money?

A page once put to himself that question. Quite young, equally impudent and abominably good-looking, one day, or rather one night, across the wide leisures and rigid ceremonial of the Court of Spain, a princess smiled at him and beckoned. That was enough. There and then he was sent to another world, to a better one—to the tropics which Columbus had found. He landed at Hayti, or rather at Hispaniola, as the island was then more musically named and, with easy gallantry, assisted in eliminating the natives.

Cæsar used to create a solitude and call it Peace. Spain used to do the same thing and call it Civilisation. In furthering her designs, the young chap learned that a neighbouring island was a mine of gold. It occurred to him that if he got enough of it he might get the princess also. Through processes with which it is idle to encumber this paragraph, he succeeded. When he left that island, which to-day is known as Puerto Rico, he had gold to melt.

Between the foregoing sentences there are years. There are torrents of blood. There are

all the civilising influences of Spain. Incidentally, the young chap had grown old. Whether he remembered the princess in problematic. That he missed his good looks is clear.

Here the plot thickens. Meanwhile he had heard that a little to the north was a land on which spouted a fountain whose waters effaced old age. To recover his youth he sailed that way. Were we writing fiction we should so arrange as to let him find the fountain, find his youth, find the princess tender and true, or better, perhaps, in view of his rejuvenation, find her daughter, and even her granddaughter, more to his taste. But this is not fiction. It is the history of Ponce de Leon—not the hotel at St Augustine, but the adventurer after whom it was named. The fountain was not found by him, but Florida was, and with it, not youth but fame.

The fountain which he sought represents the quintessence of a dream which many smart people have shared. It hallucinated the great Alexander. He tramped over India in search of it. Bacon was visited by it. He tried to produce its waters in a still. They represented to him not youth merely, but gold besides. His still produced nothing so important, but if we

may believe everything we hear—and we are always most anxious to—there are other alembics which created both.

Of these the most ample was the property of a man who made himself a contemporary of the Pompadour. At the time he was quite young—or appeared to be. But people quite old remembered him as still quite young when they were very youthful. Different people remembered him under different names. The Danish Ambassador remembered him as the *Vicomte de Bellamye*, whom he had met, three or four decenniaë back, in Venice. The Baron Stoch had dined with him in Lisbon, where he was known as the *Duc de Betmar*. That, too, was a couple of generations back. An antiquity, in recalling the red-heeled days of the Regency, recalled that he was then the *Marquis de Montferrat*. When, later, he made himself a contemporary of the Pompadour, he made himself also *Count de Saint-Germain*. Apparently nothing was easier.

Meanwhile, though his titles had changed, his looks had not. The circumstance is not as surprising as it otherwise might be. According to his own account, he had assisted at the Council of Trent. Other accounts which he

gave of himself were equally conciliatory. He had supped with Pilate and thrown dice with Faustine. These accounts, while admired, were not always accepted. In smart circles his origin was regarded as fantastic, but not fabulous. He was said to be the son of a lackey and a queen. In the antitheses of "Ruy Blas" the story is told. It is told so well that it would be an impertinence to repeat it. "Don't touch the dead of Dante," shouted Foscolo; "they frighten the living." The grave of Hugo's dead shall be to us as sacred.

To pass from it to the gay, the Count de Saint-Germain wore corsets. Behind them was a stone wrapped in flesh. In spite of which, or, perhaps, precisely on that account, he kept mothers awake and brought their daughters dreams. He had other accomplishments. He played on the violin so deliciously that he might have been born with one in his mouth. He was good at chemistry and good at quoits. His conversation was jewelled. Voltaire was not wittier, Diderot not more learned. His familiarity with the past was such that it enabled him to speak of King Arthur as though he were his first cousin, and of Charlemagne as though they had been jilted by the same woman.

His resources were as enigmatic as his age. Without anything so material as a rent roll, he lived magnificently, entertained royally, and always paid cash. When he gambled he had the tact to lose. He had the tact and, what is more, the ability to please. The mystery of him bewitched a monarch. But that was child's play. He bewitched gems. He made little diamonds big. He bewitched women. He made dowagers demoiselles.

A man lives as long as he desires, a women lives as long as she is desirable. A princess whose desirability was declining asked his aid. He gave it in a phial, the contents of which he told her to drink on the morrow. The princess took the phial home, remarked to Radegonde, her maid—a respectable person of forty—that it contained a remedy for cramps, and went to bed. During the night Radegonde, who had supped on lobster, and who, in consequence, was somewhat incommoded, turned to the phial for relief. In the morning, when she appeared to dress my lady's hair, the princess cursed her, as only a princess can curse, and rang for Radegonde. "But I am Radegonde," the poor thing expostulated; and, as a matter of fact, so she was, only, instead of being a respectable

person of forty, the cramp remedy had turned her into a soubrette of sixteen.

The *Gazette de France* states that all Paris exclaimed at the miracle. The *Gazette* adds: "*Mais M. le Comte de Saint-Germain était parti.*" We won't attempt to follow him. It would take too long. We won't attempt to explain. It would take too long also. Besides, we lack the ability. The point is that thirty years later, when he concluded to die—and for no other reason, apparently, than, as he said, because he was tired of living—the Landgrave of Hesse, whose guest he had been, took his papers, which he punctiliously and privately destroyed. Among them was the secret. It had come from Flamel.

Flamel was a scrivener, poor as a rat, but much more honest. His table was set between the pillars of the Church of Saint-Jacques. For the privilege he paid eight sols parisis a year. The amount, though small, was hard to make. To enlarge his business he set up a book-shop. There, presently, a stranger appeared with a manuscript. It was beautifully illuminated and profoundly abstruse. Flamel, unable to make head or tail of it, bought it just for that reason. He not merely bought it, he paid for it.

A man who buys a book which he can't read is a bibliophile. A man who buys a book and omits to pay for it is a bibliofilou. These definitions help to a better understanding of Flamel. The understanding will be improved when it is added that every leisure moment he gave to a study of the manuscript. For years he devoted himself to it. First the tail appeared, then a glimmer of comprehension; finally, when, after inordinate vigils, the full light was his, precisely as Monte Cristo he could have cried: "The world is mine!"

Flamel had discovered how to get rich and, incidentally, how to grow young. In the "*Traité des Lavures*," a work which he left, and which is still on view at the Bibliothèque Nationale, he expresses his pleasure as follows: "It was about noon, on a Monday, that I succeeded. But truly I tell here a secret which thou shalt find rarely written. Yet please God that all may make gold and youth at will, and, after the fashion of the sainted patriarchs, lead fat cattle to pasture."

That is all very well as far as it goes. But it does not go far enough. It never gets to the secret. Yet there was one. There must have been one. After that Monday noon Flamel,

whom the payment of eight sols had previously burdened, became prodigal in philanthropy. He established fourteen hospitals, laid out seven cemeteries, endowed a dozen churches, and built as many chapels. Some of them are Objects of Interest still. More than that, their origin and endowments are matters of record. What is yet more interesting is the fact that, several centuries later, just previous to the apparition of Saint-Germain, it was currently reported and generally believed that Flamel, amazingly young, outrageously rich, yet no longer philanthropic, was filling other cities with the uproar of his debauches. Whether or not it was he who, under the name of the Vicomte de Bellamye, erupted in Venice and, as the Duc de Betmar, entertained Baron Stoch at Lisbon, is a detail. Were we writing fiction we should assume it to be a fact. The point is that he really did have a secret which others succeeded in sharing. There was Talbot, for instance; there was Lascaris; and, last and not least, Cagliostro.

These people all knew a little more than the rest of us. Among other things, Talbot knew how to forge, but not how to do so undetectedly. As a result, he hid in a Welsh hamlet. The innkeeper there showed him a bit

of parchment and an ivory ball. Both had been taken from the tomb of a bishop. The latter had been suspected of being rich. He was suspected, too, of having concealed his riches in his shroud. As a result, the tomb was rifled. Only the parchment and the ball were found. This booty the innkeeper had acquired in exchange for a mug of ale. Talbot offered a guinea. Already he had discovered that the parchment was a recipe for the manufacture of money. The guinea accepted, Talbot, who had his reasons for avoiding London, got to Germany, got to work, and, what is more notable, got gold. He projected it as a hose projects water. He waded in it. Everyone who came near him did likewise. He turned pebbles into coin as readily as we turn paper into copy. But it was the contents of the ivory ball, a white powder, that did the trick. Though he could read the recipe he could not compound it. When the powder gave out so did his money.

But no matter. There was another and a more capable person about just then. Who he was and what he was never have been and, now, never will be known. He did not float. He was not fluid. But he appeared, disappeared, reappeared, changing in these changes everything,

even to his appearance. Without age, without identity, his presence, more often suspected than perceived, persisted for a century. He had as many names as Vishnu, perhaps as many avatars. Of his names the most certain is Lascaris. Of his avatars the most palpable is prelacy. He entered history clothed with the dignities of a Lesbian Archimandrite. Whether he brought with him gusts of those songs which blew through Mitylene one may surmise and never know. But this is clear: The multiple and sufficiently attested transmutations which he effected were accomplished either through the medium of previously trained adepts, or, when personally conducted, were produced for purposes entirely altruistic.

In a village at nightfall a stranger appears. He has come unawaited, as death and thieves do. He enters the poorest home, asks for old iron, turns it into gold, and evaporates. It was his custom and his poetry. Someone who knew what poetry was said: "On the morrow he was sought, but he had vanished like the holy apparitions which sometimes visit the heart of man."

The apparition that succeeded him was more tangible, more brilliant, more real. Carlyle used his worst ink to dirty it. But Time has its re-

venge. Carlyle is handsomely bound and never read. The memory of Cagliostro is immortal. Born without scruples, he omitted to acquire any. A cheerful disdain of righteousness is highly conducive to fame. People more censorious than ourselves regard that disdain as conducive to infamy. It may be so. But in the spaciousness of the perspectives of history you can't tell t'other from which. In lieu of scruples Cagliostro had charms, which is more than can be said of Carlyle. He knew all languages, including the latter's dialect, which was a feat in itself, and including silence, too, for silence is a language also. He had other accomplishments more surprising still. He knew how to make his clients believe anything they wished. He knew how to make the dead appear in mirrors and the quick in carafes. He knew how to turn ugliness into beauty, age into youth, hemp into silk, and lead into gold. He knew how to be two thousand years old. He knew how to hide beneath the plumage of a peacock the beak and talons of a bird of prey.

Charming and cruel, he could captivate and coerce. One of his conquests was Louis XVI. By royal edict it was treasonable to speak ill of him. A greater conquest was Paris. Released

from the Bastile, where he had been put because of that tiresome old story of the diamond necklace, festivals were given, streets were illuminated, Paris went mad. Boulogne did, too. When he took ship there five thousand people implored his benediction on their knees. His release was felt to be a blessing, his departure a curse. The multitude called him the Benefactor of Mankind—big words, which he rewarded by foretelling the fall of the Bastile. He foretold what would occur the following week, the following month, the ensuing year, or ten years later in Madrid, in Vienna, in Pekin. He foretold everything, except, indeed, that the Seer of Chelsea should write him down and we should write him up.

Clairvoyance has its limits; so, too, has cheek. Cagliostro possessed both, and with them a secret—that of not having any, and yet appearing to have one. It is the greatest of all. His predecessors, Flamel and Co., were more inventive. Their discoveries are lost, thank fortune, yet—barring the probable—everything being possible, science may find them again, and perhaps, too, the ability to radiate that atmospheric seduction which Bloomsbury calls the *je ne sais quoi*.

We hope not. Smartness, restricted to the few, now disturbs the many. With a different kettle of fish the words of Flamel would be fulfilled. The possession of youth and gold would be universal, the pasturing of cattle ditto. That is not a consummation to be wished. Though smartness and its appanages would then be common, human nature, being invariable, would remain unchanged. People would want, as people have ever wanted, just what they have not got. Instead of trying to be smart everybody would succeed in being stupid. Youth and its loveliness would no longer allure and poverty be the world's desire.

XII

FASHIONS IN POISONS

POISONS may be toxicolloquially catalogued as triply fascinating. First, because of the mystery of them; second, because behind the mystery loom the great figures of the Borgias and the Brinvilliers; and, finally, because they involve the whole subject of murder considered as an art.

The term "art" is used for the reason that De Quincey so labelled it. He had a pretext. Had he wished he could have had a text.

Once upon a time people who got in the way were dosed with hemlock. Death came very agreeably. It neither convulsed nor distorted. It left the beauty of the victim unmarred, the features uncontracted, the mouth half closed. It left no trace either. There is art. Whoso says art says Greece. In Greece poisoners were artists. That is, a number of centuries ago.

In the days that succeeded them art persisted but methods changed. Occasionally people who were in the way did not wait to be killed, but killed themselves. That simplified matters. Occasionally, too, they were urged to die. It

was the young emperors of old Rome who did the urging. Yet sometimes they did not bother. A lady named Locusta discovered a way of cooking mushrooms which was found to be very serviceable. Nero served it to his brother Britannicus. Agrippina set it before her husband, Claudian. Domitian administered it first to his father, Vespasian; next to his brother, Titus. They were all in the way. The mushroom stew dispersed them. What the ingredients were we may surmise and never know. It was an imperial dish, however, and, as such, reserved for the purple. Patricians, in their inability to obtain it, invented a needle and a ring.

Lampridus, or Spartian, or whoever the brute may have been that abridged a chronicle in the "*Scriptores Historæ Augustæ*," describes the needle. It had a poisoned tip. Those who liked gave a little prick to those they did not like, and the latter fell dead. This performance usually occurred in the Forum, where the crowd was such that the assassin could lose himself in it.

Samples of the rings, recovered from the ruins of Pompeii, any one may examine at Naples. They suggest nothing so much as vipers of gold. A receptacle, moved by a spring, contained poison which exuded at a touch. At table, in the ani-

mation of small talk, the assassin made but a gesture. On the food of his neighbour a drop would fall. The deed was done.

There also was art—too precious perhaps to be lost. It is rumoured that Naples is not now the sole depository of these playthings. In New York, a few years ago, a death occurred which a jewelled snake, resting for a second on a glass of champagne, is believed to have occasioned. The belief may be unfounded, yet the possibilities in it are splendidly ornate.

Possibilities not similar but cognate were thoroughly appreciated during the Renaissance. That was the age when murder really flourished. There were sixty recognised modes of eliminating, without fuss or scandal, such people as got in the way. It would be fastidious to describe them all. The most fashionable was Aqua Toffana, which remained in vogue up to the beginning of the last century, and of which to-day we know only that, presumably a preparation of arsenic, it was without colour, taste, or odour. But it was very effective. Adepts smeared it on one side of the blade of a golden knife, with which they then cut a peach, and after giving the poisoned half to the lady who had incurred their jealousy, ate

the other half in her presence. It is difficult to regard that as otherwise than artistic, too. But there was another preparation still more so. It acted not at once, but years later. The victim became toothless, bald, and dessicated, expiring after an agony relentless and prolonged. Artistic and ingenious as well were the poisoned candles, poisoned gloves, and poisoned flowers, with which, under the Borgias, death was distributed in Italy, and which the Medici introduced into France. These things left no traces. Not that it would have mattered much if they had. The Medici cared nothing for the existence which they led in the minds of other people. The Borgias cared less. For that matter, the Borgian mode of life is to-day untellable except in Latin—the one language, parenthetically, which is suited to love, to religion, and to crime. But the callousness of the clan, a callousness legendary in Lucretia and accentuated in Alexander, culminates in Cesare.

In history's caverns there are monsters more masterful than he, but none more cold-blooded. A galley-slave in Mars is as familiar with the sonnets of Petrarch as he was with shame. The term had no meaning for him. Without

heart, without nerves, without sensibilities of any kind, he turned sin into a system, crime into a code, and thus equipped, trusting no one and assassinating those who trusted him, cleared his way almost to the pontificate.

Alexander, his father, exhaled death. He had cups, perfumes, and even eucharists which produced it. And this pontiff, from whose presence poison emanated, trembled before his son. It was as well, perhaps. But perhaps, too, he trembled insufficiently. For presently, together they planned the elimination of five cardinals. Then, through what jugglery is less uncertain than clear, the wine intended for the prelates, and which had been studiously blended with cantarella—the household drug—father and son drank instead. Alexander tumbled over. He was dead. But Cesare, who knew what he was about, had himself placed in the carcass of a bull, from which, either by virtue of an old superstition, or else because of antitoxic properties which the carcasses of bulls do not possess to-day, he emerged subtle as a serpent that has discarded its skin.

Among poisoners anterior and subsequent Cesare Borgia is princeps. The champion of the lot, he was a pestilence in flesh and blood.

Beside him those whom it remains to consider may seem rather trite. This we regret. If only for the purposes known as literary, we should like to present a crescendo of crime. Yet in the career of Madame de Brinvilliers we find some consolation. Though less spacious than his, it is almost as fine.

The Marchioness of Brinvilliers, née — not *Retroussé*, as someone somewhere amusingly noted, but — *D'Aubray*, was the daughter of a Frenchman of note. According to an account which she was conscientious enough to provide, her childhood was remarkable only for its perversity, and her conduct, while yet a girl, left more to be desired than even she found it convenient to express. By way of offset, she charmed on sight. Extremely pretty, fetchingly slight, she had the face of an angel, the smile of a seraph, the attitude of a saint, and a voice which was silken in its sweetness. Fancy a demon masquerading as *Psyche* and her portrait is done. At the age of twenty she became the wife of *De Brinvilliers*, a young nobleman of wealth. The wealth came to him through his mother from *Gobelin*, founder of the tapestry looms. In the halls to which he took his bride the number of these tapestries

which must have been needed surpasses belief. In any event, a few of them are required to drape this story. For the marchioness promptly interested herself elsewhere, and the marquis followed suit. The immediate object of this lady's fancy was a lieutenant named Sainte-Croix. Though her husband did not mind, her father did. He had Sainte-Croix thrown into the Bastille, from which ultimately the lieutenant issued. But meanwhile two things had occurred. The marchioness had accumulated an intense hatred of her father, and the officer had acquired a thorough familiarity with arsenic. When finally he was released, the dance began.

In the guise of a sister of charity, the marchioness proceeded to promenade through hospital wards. To the ill and ailing she brought words of comfort and delicate food. But those to whom she ministered died, in great agony at that. The marchioness, however, was merely experimenting with poison which she had got from Sainte-Croix. When she was assured that its effects were not suspected, the experiments were complete. At this juncture her father invited her to visit him. As a result she ministered, too, to him. For eight months she caressed him with one hand and dosed him

with the other. After poisoning him twenty-eight times vainly, she doubled the dose, and he died.

That death slaked her hate. It enriched her also. But she had brothers and sisters whom, unfortunately for them, it enriched besides. During all this time the marchioness and her husband were leading the life which befits people of rank. Such a life requires money. To obtain more she poisoned her two brothers, and planned to eliminate her sisters as well. Meanwhile, to keep her hand in, she distributed arsenic right and left. She fed it to her servants because they were awkward; to her daughter because she was stupid; to her husband because he was in the way. The marquis was highly accommodating, but he continued to be, and that prevented her from marrying Sainte-Croix. But Sainte-Croix, who had no desire whatever of becoming the mate of this reptile, fed De Brinvilliers with antidotes, and the poor chap, poisoned one day, was counterpoisoned the next. How he enjoyed what was going on within him is a detail, the point is that enterprises so amusing ended as all things must. In the thick of them all it occurred to Sainte-Croix to die, and in dying to leave behind various documents and confessions so compromising that the

marchioness was arrested, tried, convicted, beheaded, her body burned, and the ashes dispersed.

It is said that her end was highly edifying. We have not a doubt of it. But so, too, was the fashion which she set. Paris, and more particularly Versailles, became powdered with poison. Even the king got a pinch or two. That he merited it is clear. The fourteenth Louis of France was not a good man, he was not even a good-looking man, but as kings go, he was very imposing, quite august, and not unreasonably royal.

Among his caprices was Louise de la Vallière, a human flower that exhaled everything which is sweet—and sad. The charm of her was too delicate to last, too delicate at least for the peppered palate of the monarch, too delicate in any event to withstand the splendour of the sunburst projected by the Montespan. In the glare of it the girl withered. Her rival then became Queen of the Court of France. Royally beautiful, regally robed, sovereign in manner, and sumptuous in magnificence, Madame de Montespan, in lieu of charming, coerced. To use a localism of the land, she made the rain and the fine weather. She did more, she made her children “princes of the blood.”

A lady so resourceful does not abdicate readily. At the first suspicion of a possible successor she bethought herself of the powders which Sainte-Croix had dispensed. The effort to obtain them led her into strange company and stranger halls—into cellars where life was an article of commerce, into dens where hags compounded philtres, into chapels where the Black Mass was held, into orgies sacrilegious, necromantic, and obscene. From one such excursion she returned with a mixture of bat's blood and honey, a remedy which was regarded as highly efficacious for the restoration of alienated affection.

In a recent work concerning the lady, M. Funck-Brentano says that this brew made the king deadly ill. The point to note is that when he recovered the new star waned; only, however, to be succeeded by another. The latter, Angélique de Fontanges, a very pretty maid of honour, so entranced the volatile heart of Louis that the prestige of the favourite was menaced as never before. In her rage she determined to kill them both, and at once she was back in those cellars, haunting those dens, consulting with artists in death, making her plans, and expending in the preliminaries nearly a million of money.

From these attentions Louis, of course, escaped, but Angélique died. Then the details of the plot, obtained by the secret service, were, together with the confessions of the various artists and assistants, submitted to the king. What happened to the accomplices is unimportant. Some of them were promptly broken on the wheel; others lived for years—one of them for forty—chained by the foot in subterranean cells. With Madame de Montespan, mother of children of the house of France, nothing very serious could be done. She was thanked for her good offices and invited to retire into a convent, where ultimately she died, quite like a saint.

Meanwhile the taste for poisons increased. There was barely a woman of rank who was not suspected of trying to get her husband out of the way. Many grandes dames were tried; some were convicted; others, including the Duchesse de Bouillon, were requested to amuse themselves elsewhere. But while the taste increased the mode improved. Powders ceased to be fashionable. It was no longer considered elegant to put arsenic in food. A drinking-cup was devised which turned wine into venom. Modern science has denied that such a cup could be. Another invention was a looking-glass. Its properties

were such that anybody who looked in one fell dead. Modern science has denied the possibility of that magic. Modern science is very sceptical. It has routed many a beautiful legend. By way of compensation, it has produced toxics which would have thrown the dilettanti of the Renaissance into stupors of admiration.

Consider, for instance, the micro-organisms which cause disease. Speaking relatively, it is but the day before yesterday that science made their acquaintance. We all know now that the cause of this complaint and that is an insidious yet infinitesimal germ which, removed from the patient, can lead a separate and potentially virulent existence until, introduced into other circles, it infects anew. Given any of these terrific little things and a modern Medici could distribute viaticums as indetectably as Fate.

Within the bit of *lignum vitæ* which served Caracalla for heart there were concentrated the cruelty and the guile of a wilderness of tiger-cats. When the pretorians eliminated him they found in his luggage poisons supersufficient for the destruction of all the legions that he led. What fresh turpitudes he was devising history has omitted to relate. But this is clear: could he have foreseen the possibilities in microbes which

we have suggested, mountains of poisons would have seemed to him paltry.

Apart from these possibilities, any physician to-day who happened to be artistically inclined could adapt penalties to persons. In a lady, for instance, who had become superfluous, he could induce consumption. Consumption is a very ladylike disease. No gentlewoman, however sensitive, would be ashamed to die of it. Then there is gout. Gout is a highly aristocratic complaint. Any self-respecting snob in whom it was induced would succumb to it with thanksgiving.

Of possibilities and powers such as these the past knew nothing. By way of compensation it possessed poisons that were perfumes. Their odour perverted the imagination and stained the thoughts. They turned conceptions of right into wrong and made the unholy adorable. They drove matrons mad and senators madder.

Long since, these perfumes have evaporated. In their stead are corrosives just as coercive. Catalogued as libel and slander, they are quite as convenient as the cantarella of the Borgias and even more maleficent than microbes. These are the poisons that are modish to-day. Such is modern progress.

XIII

CLARET AND CREAM

THE British Academy of Letters has, we learn, become a fact. We learn, also, that its object is uncertain. To others, perhaps, yet not to us. In the cannibal South Seas old people are knocked on the head. That is quite as it should be. Old people are tenacious of their ideas. In killing them off progress is facilitated. England is eminently conservative. Instead of filling cemeteries with the decrepit she furnishes an academy for them. So are the just rewarded; so, too, is conservatism maintained.

In the circumstances there is no good and valid reason why we should not have an academy in the States—but on different lines; for that matter, on lines so ample that the clothes-line would not be omitted from them.

What we require are not the *arrière-pensées* of age but the frank enthusiasms of beauty. It is only from the young that one really

learns, and one learns best from those who are gracious. Highways are trodden and sterile. It is in the pampas, the savannahs, the forest primeval, in lands that are virgin and minds fresh as they, that Nature gives utterance to her thoughts.

We cannot listen to her too often. She has always something new to say, or, if not new, then something so old that it seems quite novel. But it is only to the young that she says it. In default of her, let us listen to them, and, with that object, form an academy of those who have done nothing.

There are plenty of them. From the tons of manuscript—unsolicited and with stamps enclosed—which we see daily dumped on editorial desks, we think it safe to assume that out of the wilderness light shall come. In any event, it is clear that there are enough amateurs in our midst to stock academies by the cityful.

They have, indeed, done nothing yet. But therein is their charm. An academy composed of young people who have done nothing yet would be more alluring than one made up of fossils who are unable to do anything more.

Such an academy would be ideal and its

establishment easy. Any one of the multitudinous millionairesses whom we behold floating about could usher it into being with but the wave of a cheque. Then, quite like Sappho at Mitylene, she could beckon about her clusters of fair young women, who, from kissable lips would instruct the world in the arts of love and life.

What more could the heart desire? Those kissable lips would tell us what we have long since learned to forget—that we all make a great fuss over things which are not worth bothering about; that constancy, for instance, which we always exact and never accord, is the result of nothing more than an absence of imagination. That would be very good for the first lesson; for there is nothing so tiresome as a woman without imagination, except a woman who has too much.

Those kissable lips, in dilating on the subject, would cite apposite examples, among others, a recent case perhaps, in which a pistol shot, fired in the dead of night, reverberated through the small talk of the land. The echoes, subsiding, dwindled, it is true, into the nothing from which they had sprung. But, assuming that a shot there had been, what an endearing

homily could be drawn on the tastefulness and tactfulness of those who, for bagatelles such as this, do their worst to raise the roof. "*Il fait beau aujourd'hui*," a French caricaturist made one English lord say to another, "*allons tuer quelque chose*." There are people who are just as eager the moment the domestic sky is obscured.

A fine rebuke they would get from fair women, and fine applause, too, would be bestowed on the gentleman who, discovered behind the curtains of a boudoir, and being noisily asked by the husband what he was doing there, answered, with an assurance entirely Apollonian: "I am taking a walk."

In this way we should acquire instruction, not merely in manners, but in repartee. As a people we need it. As a people we are, of course, delightful; but we are neither witty nor well bred. By way of compensation we are highly moral, or think ourselves so, which amounts to quite the same thing. Our novels are padded with purity and scenery and our newspapers with hypocrisy and cant. Were proof of our morality required, there it is. But through some defect of the climate—unless it be of the schools—we lack the higher

morality which was inculcated by Epicurus, by Epictetus, by one of the popes, Boniface VIII., and which consists in accepting with gaiety and indulgence such accidents as we cannot avoid. But not a bit of it. We make the mistake of taking ourselves seriously when there is nothing earthly worth taking seriously at all—except, indeed, the quality of the champagne which we drink and the giving and the acceptance of invitations to dine.

Apropos whereto those fair women would have a word or two for the metropolitan hostess. They would tell her that, of all forms of iniquity, dining is the most barbarous. In primitive days people fed in common through fear of being attacked. As often as not the fear was justified. Nowadays people feed in common through the more dreadful fear of being bored, and succeed very perfectly in becoming so. "*Venez messieurs,*" said a numbered Louis of France, "*allons nous ennuyer ensemble.*" That is the way modern invitations read. Yet, since such things must be, those who love righteousness without abhorring mammon should throw out the sweets. In this sanitary age flattery is the only variety that can be hygienically

assimilated. Of that the least among us can never have enough.

In discussing our modes, caprices, passions, and disillusiones—which is about all we can call our very own, except, indeed, our further charm—the fact, as Goethe noted, that we are all of us capable of crime—though it be but that of bad taste, which is assuredly the worst of all—in discussing these things those fair women would pass from grave to gay and display for us the bewilderments and witcheries of life as it is.

They would show us that it is a continuous catastrophe. They would show us that, whether it be that of an individual or of a nation, life is but a diffusion of stupidity and vulgarity. The showing would not be cheerful, but it would have the merit of being exact.

They would not stop there either. From the premises advanced it would be logical and agreeable to assume that life on earth is a sort of leprosy, the result, perhaps, of a morbid secretion from which healthy planets are immune.

And, after all, why not? Sir Robert Ball, not long since, informed us that, within the relatively narrow sphere to which observation

is confined, there are not less than three hundred million worlds. Beyond the uttermost of these worlds there are other planets, other systems, other suns. Wherever imagination, in its weariness, would set a limit, there is space begun.

In view of which, and of more, too, it becomes humorous to suppose that the vulgarity and stupidity on exhibition here are indefinitely repeated throughout space. On the moon life there may be. The moon was once part of the earth. It may, in consequence, have been infected with the original complaint. It is possible, also, that, through atmospheric and aqueous affinities, Mars has been exposed to the same disease. From Venus and Mercury science has discovered that such affinities have been withheld. But of the other worlds and systems we know so little that it is idle to attempt to know less.

Yet, though one and all of these worlds move in a mystery which is due to our ignorance, we may pierce it with the hope that they have been preserved from the bewilderments and witcheries of which life on this planet is the cause.

In displaying these things the cluster of fair

young women would indicate the forethought of Providence, which has provided us with ample compensations. For there are compensations. There are two of them—and two is a good many.

The first is evil. We do not appreciate evil at its worth. It is the handicraft of Satan. We do not appreciate him as we should. He is a great artificer. He is more; he is a great artist. It was he who created this compensation, which is a jewel, a luxury, and a necessity in one. And naturally. Evil is the counterpart of excellence. Both have their roots in nature. One could not be destroyed without the other. For every shape of evil there is a corresponding form of good. Virtue would be meaningless were it not for vice. Beauty would have no charm were it not for ugliness. Genius would have no message were it not for bores.

Evil is, therefore, a jewel, and highly salutary at that. Were it eliminated from the scheme of things life would have no savour and joy no delight. Existence would provide the monotony of silence. Happiness and unhappiness would be synonymous states.

The other jewel which Providence has set in our tiara is superstition. What would we do

without that? A superstition is a hope. Besides, is it not nicer to be wrong in a given belief than not to have it at all? Of course it is. We believe what we wish, never what we should.

It is fortunate that we can. Were it otherwise, the vitriol which science has thrown at faith would have set society mad. But not a bit of it. Society turned its back. The attitude is commendable, for it is on superstition that we all subsist—superstition by day, dreams at night.

Superstition covers a multitude of stupidities. But it is ductile and plastic. It lends itself to combinations which are as marvellous as they are enchanting. We are indebted to it for the masterpieces of art, for the splendour of cathedrals, for the seductions of song, for real literature and good verse. We owe to it everything, even to the amenities of life. Superstition is the essential ingredient of everything that is charming. It is the basis of ethics and the foundation of beauty. It has decorated life and robbed death of its grotesqueness. It is, therefore, in accordance with the order of things and the necessities of man.

Truth, on the other hand, is vicious. We may

sigh for it, but it is best that we should sigh in vain. Truth is hard. It is rigid. It is not ductile nor is it plastic. It does not yield. It is vicious, and, being vicious, it bites. Get in its way, and, unless you have had the forethought to antisepticise yourself with indifference, it will cause a hydrophobia for which the only Pasteur Institute is time.

Superstition is just the reverse. It is amiable and consolatory. It is, indeed, a jewel. We should hold fast to it. We should hold fast to what we may and not try to prove anything.

From maxims of this fastidious morality deductions follow. It will be seen that life is not all that fancy might paint it. It will be suspected that its compensations are not as compensatory as they look. From these premises it will be argued that there must be an error somewhere, a big mistake, a stitch dropped from the original scheme of things, a blunder, extending back, perhaps, to the parturitions of the primal protoplasm.

Such argument is entirely valid. We esteem ourselves at a value which we do not possess; for no reason other than innate conceit we fancy ourselves advanced. That fancy is so comforting that with it we have developed an

idolatry of the most amusing kind. We have developed the worship of self. The unction of that worship is so thick that through it we fail to see how stupid we look. We fail to see that the most gracious and indulgent sentiment which we can have for ourselves is not esteem but contempt. We have not advanced; we have deviated. It is not from apes that we should have descended, though better, perhaps, apes than reptiles; yet, had evolution had us really in its charge, instead of being superior animals we should be human butterflies, subsisting on dew and desire, with youth, winged and beautiful, for the crown and conclusion of life.

A life such as that, untroubled by dentists, unburdened by tailors, untrammelled by bills, unencumbered by bores, a life free, volatile, and quasi-divine, a life passed among flowers and suave perfumes, a life of sheer poetry which, but for some archaic error, might have been ours—a life such as that, however fantastic, would, to say the least, be more agreeable than one such as this, in which we do little of more importance than assist with the passivity which good breeding requires at the loss of our illusions, our umbrellas, and our hair.

Et voilà, et cetera, and so forth.

It is cups of claret and cream of this order that, in the ideal academy which we advocate, clusters of fair women would convey, and, in conveying, uplift.

For women, particularly when pretty, are the natural instructors of man. Their intuitions are more valuable than the certainties of mathematics, their insight surer than the demonstrations which logic provides. They are abundantly lacking in sense, it is true. But when has reason governed the world? It is by the heart-strings alone that men can be pulled, and it is only women that can do it. In addition, they have the immense advantage of being all alike, in that they are, every one of them, different. And a cluster of them delivering the messages of nature, to whom, through that weakness which is their strength, they are nearer than man, would constitute not merely an ideal academy, but give the world fresh conceptions of beauty and therewith a taste, as yet uncultivated, for claret and cream.

XIV

HUMAN HYENAS

THE lives of good men are handsomely bound and never read—by ourselves at least—though no doubt there are people to whom they constitute a source of severe satisfaction. Conversely the lives of bad men have yet to appear. When they do, the fascination of their charm will be that which attaches to the abnormal. For though hyenas alarm they also attract. In history as in romance it is the shudder that tells. In menageries and zoos it is the wildest beast that obtains the best attention.

Quite naturally too. There are so few beasts now that are not entirely tame. By the same token shudders were never more scarce. Contemporaneous crime is very commonplace. But occasionally, by accident, something out of the ordinary will occur, and then even the virtuous take to reading about it. Particularly if there be a woman in the case. Yet it is only, in addition to petticoats, when murder and mystery

are agreeably fused that you feel you are getting your money's worth.

That, too, is natural. There is nothing so comforting as a good old-fashioned murder. There is nothing so poetic either. For behind it is an effort to outwit destiny, the attempt to change the course of events, and to change them after the fashion of fate, indetectably.

The idea of being able to do all that is highly poetic. But it is also primitive. Primitive man had three or four ideas. Civilised man has not many more. With this difference, however. Primitive man, disturbed in his ideas, vanished. In his place there sprang a beast. That beast civilised man has quelled. But not exterminated. The brute is among us still. Yet so tame that the majority of us forget that he is about. It takes a murder to remind us of him.

Murder is neozoic. It shows a relapse of nature. The murderer may have in his appearance nothing resembling the cave-dweller, yet behind appearances—always illusory—is the troglodyte. Through causes generally reducible to crises of the emotions the creature's few ideas become disturbed. Then abruptly the being apparently civilised evaporates. He has gone. In his place is the hyena. There is a shriek.

A silence. The next morning the papers are full of it.

That is the ordinary case. There are others. There are crimes in which there is no atavism. There are murders incidental to the abstract sciences; felonies of the professional order. These are accidents. According to statistics—and what should we do without them?—in the Benighted States there occurred last year nearly nine thousand cases appertaining to this and to the former variety. That is a nice showing. In addition, there are murders effected by men who are not professional or primitive, but wise. Concerning these we have no data. They leave none. They leave nothing except now and again a death which is attributed to natural causes. These people are not hyenas. They are men of ability. They are very interesting. There is another class more interesting still. They form the coterie of criminals who are above the law. We will get to them in a minute.

Meanwhile, in ordinary cases, just prior to the shriek, to the silence, and to the headlines in the papers, there occur, almost invariably, certain phenomena which are perhaps worth noting.

First is a condition of irritability induced

by a disturbance of ideas. From this condition paralysis of memory results. The patient forgets the past and its lessons, the present and its penalties. In his mind there is a complete obliteration of all knowledge, except the fact that some particular person is offensively occupied in continuing to be. That fact, increasing the irritation, induces a state quasi-somnambulistic. Of all the cells of the brain there is but one that is awake. Over the others sleep has slipped. But in that cell is an incitement inciting the patient to kill.

Then it is that there ensues the shriek and the succeeding silence. But before the reporters get to work other phenomena have occurred. Paralysis subsides. Somnambulism ceases. There is an immediate awakening of the entire brain. The past with its lessons returns. On its heels the present and its penalties troop. In their sudden rush the troglodyte dematerialises. Civilised man reappears. The patient sees what he has done, and, seeing, it seems to him that another must have done it.

He is right. The mind has many a cellar. In them strange tenants prowl. Beneath the brain are the caves of subconsciousness. There, influences that we know nothing of, impulses

which the majority of us never feel, watch and wait. Our individuality is dual. Half our being is unaware what the other half is about. In normal condition man is a bundle of ideas and sensations arranged in order and sequence. But in certain crises of the emotions the orderly arrangement gets twisted, ideas and sensations become displaced, and from the individual, ordinarily normal, emerges the human hyena.

Usually the beast is subordinated, controlled, but never banished. It is there crouching in the caves of the soul. A distinguishing trait of the gentleman is that he never betrays its presence. A thinker is too philosophic. Hence the value of blue blood. Hence, also, the beauty of sound logic. But when in pathological conditions, induced by causes as yet obscure, the other, the simian, the secreted self, breaks loose, then there is the devil to pay and something to read about in the papers.

That, perhaps, is the psychology of every night murder. Among savans there is nothing of this. A trick merely with clogged dice. Among professionals there is some of the first and much of the latter. In the criminals who are above the law both elements are present with power added.

Power consists in having a million bayonets behind you. Its diffusion is not general. But there are people who possess it. For one, the German Kaiser. Not long since somebody or other diagnosed in him the habitual criminal. We doubt that he is that. But we suspect that, were it not for the press, he would show more of primitive man than he has thus far thought judicious.

Tsi An, the Empress Regent of China, has been less circumspect. As you may remember, a few summers ago, this lady succeeded in throwing us all into fits. Subsequently we derived much pleasure from an article by Lombroso, in which he catalogued her foremost among historic beasts. The naïvete of that seemed to us refreshing.

The lady is not, perhaps, one whom we should care to meet in the dark, but there are corridors in which we have encountered a number of people beside whom she is quite an engaging person. Take, for instance, Caligula. There you have an artist in blood, a connoisseur in crime, a ruler to whom general fiendishness was both a governmental necessity and a personal delight. And take Caracalla. A thinker has said that no mortal is wholly vile. Caracalla was.

He had not a taste, not a vice that was not washed and rewashed in blood. Beside a savage such as he and a saurian such as Caligula the old woman in China looks rather cheap.

There are others! In particular, there is Attila. Where he passed, the earth remained for ages bare. The whirlwind that he loosed swept civilisation like a broom. In the echoes of his passage you catch but the crash of falling cities, the cries of the vanquished, the death-rattle of nations, the surge and roar of seas of blood. In their reverberations Attila looms, dragging the desert after him, tossing it like a pall on the face of the world. In the fury with which he pounced on antiquity there is the impersonality of a cyclone. By comparison with the havoc which he wrought, the contortions of Caracalla become unimportant caprices. Beside this human avalanche Caligula dwindles ridiculously. "But who are you?" a startled prelate found the strength to gasp. Said Attila, "I am the Scourge of God."

Another fine fiend was Tamerlane. In the menagerie of history he is thoroughly red—red with what Marlowe called war's rich livery. It was part of him. When he was born his

hands were full of blood. Subsequently, when he did not wade in it, it formed his usual bath. In his career is the monotony of the infernal regions. It is made up of groans. Yet then he knew but one thing—how to kill. He came, saw, slaughtered, and departed. When he had gone he left nothing—"at most," an old writer says, "a dumb sound like a drum beaten under a blanket." Beside that sound what are the tom-toms of Tsi An?

For that matter, what are they beside the timbrels of the Tsar Ivan, who, though quite demoniac, fancied himself divine. "I am your god," he announced to some wretches for whom he was preparing a hurried execution. "I am your god, as God is mine." Whether the announcement consoled them is immaterial. The theory of it delighted him. At Novgorod, for no reason whatever other than the exercise of his divinity, he began a leisurely massacre that outlasted a month. Every noon, from five hundred to a thousand people were driven before him and poignantly despatched. Occasionally he lent a hand, running his subjects through and through, killing them like so many vermin, laughing mightily at the stupidity of their agony, and, when his wrist wearied, ordering

them off to tall gibbets, to seething vats, or, more expeditiously, drowning them wholesale in the river. Sometimes a mob of people were strung up by the heels. Sometimes they were hacked to pieces. Sometimes they were first strung up a bit, then hacked a little, and, finally, tossed into the vats. Sometimes also a pack of hounds was unleashed, and as Ivan eyed the fight of men and dogs the hyena within awoke, his own fangs glistened, and with a roar he would bury them in a subject's throat. Nor was he without humour. An envoy of the King of Poland presumed to appear before him with his hat on. By way of rebuke he had that hat nailed to the envoy's head.

The rebuke was not perhaps what we call epigrammatic. But at least it was to the point. It made up in irony what it lacked in paradox. Tamerlane would have enjoyed it. So, too, would Cesare Borgia.

There is another hyena. Ivan was human. He had his weaknesses. Among them were seven wives. In Cesare Borgia there was nothing human. The caverns of history hold monsters more masterful than he, but none more cold-blooded. To every hyena there come moments of repletion and fatigue. With these

moments come a desire for rest. When the beast is fed he is at peace with the world. Cesare Borgia was never fed. As we have elsewhere noted, he was never weary. He was without nerves, without heart, without weaknesses of any kind. Beside him other fiends, including the Empress Tsi An, look rather vulgar.

The candle which that woman holds to Philip II. is not much of a dip either. That demon who presided over the better part of the globe, over an entire eclipse of the intellect as well, who made it blasphemous to think, and who, squatting in the Escorial, dissolved into a mass of mud, knew no pleasure—save that of motioning people out of existence—and never smiled, save at the human fireworks which the auto-da-fés flared for him on holidays.

In the perspectives of chronicles Philip, Ivan, Tamerlane, and the rest loom like ogres in a fairy tale. They affright, but they detain. There is nothing commonplace about them. They are the antithesis of the humdrum, homicidal maniacs, with death for delirium and the world for cell, the real hyenas, unmatched, without lineage, whose successors shall never be. For the present at least. The times are

too trite. There are none like them any more. By comparison Tsi An is but a vicious child. Much as we otherwise admire the lady, we cannot connive at Lombroso's effort to boost her to where they stand.

Seen through contemporaneous records Tsi An is a bad woman. But women, however bad, are never as bad as bad men. They may have the desire, but they lack the nerve. Tsi An could not face the allies.

The feminine in her took fright. A male hyena would have stood his ground, only to lose it perhaps, and his head as well. Yet, though he fell, it would have been in the roar of cannon, in the shriek of shell, defiant and hyenaesque to the last. It is of such stuff as this that fiends and heroes are made. They are not afraid. Tsi An was not either. Except of danger. It is that exception which debars her from mounting to the glorious menagerie where the other beasts are.

"What is glory?" a young barbarian asked an old Roman. "To create splendour," the latter replied, "or to destroy it." To-day destructive ability is lacking. Power, even when backed by bayonets, is powerless before the press. There you have the great deterrent. The press is not

destructive. It stands for nothing that is. It is for this reason that crime, though continuous, is commonplace. In descending the centuries it has degenerated into a condition sometimes interesting, occasionally exciting, but symptomatic of a disease, for which, in the advance of therapeutics, a prophylactic some day or other will be devised.

When that day comes—when it does—the triteness that the morning papers will display makes us yawn in advance.

XV

THE COURTS OF LOVE

THE 'varsities are changing their chairs. It is high time. When we went to school we were taught everything it was easiest to forget. Our curriculum comprised the largest possible number of subjects of which the least possible use could be made. No doubt they were designed for our good. Yet we are unable to conjecture what difference it would have made had they been intended for our harm. We are unable to recall a single one of them.

Now, however, things are looking up. Oxford, for instance, is throwing out Greek. In the States generally, instead of the mummeries of the classics there are modern tongues and history in lieu of calculus. That is all very well. But the change is susceptible of improvement.

Learning is not fashionable. Society has a great contempt for it. If you do not believe us

go and see. You will find it stupid to be wise all alone. For alone you will be. The more you know the more diligently you will be avoided. And very naturally. When your Red Badge of Culture does not put your hostess to sleep, it makes her feel ignorant. Neither proceeding is societyfied.

No, indeed. A knowledge of history, however superficial, will not bring you invitations to dinner. It is the same with languages. You may develop into a polyglot and die a bounder. The majority of us want to see our names in the papers. The ambition is quite noble, and highly American. But an acquaintance with Cicero, and even with Carnegie, won't help you to it.

It is for this reason that the change in chairs is susceptible of improvement. The better advancement and future prospects of the youth of the land demand that universities shall throw out history and languages as already they are throwing classics and calculus, and in their stead provide courses on What's What. And what is there but love and lucre?

These two little things are the motor forces of society. Beside them, barring the fashions and the charm of *médisance*—we say *médisance*

because it sounds so much more cosmopolitan than tittle-tattle—nothing counts. No, nothing. Moreover, they are as potent and disintegrating as radium. Then, too, instruction regarding them is really diverting. Students who take them up will not merely learn something, they will remember it.

To be rich, for instance, seems complex. It is very simple. In an educational magazine, not long ago, Professor Carnegie, Professor Depew, and other savans indicated the process. According to Professor Carnegie you must push. Manners do not make the millionaire. Professor Depew advocated economy. A dollar in the bank is worth two on a margin. Professor Mills advised not more than eight hours' sleep. The other fellow must not catch you napping. Professor Morgan recommended investments. We believe that he has a few to unload. Now add all that up, and wealth, which looked complex, becomes easy as ping-pong.

Love is different. To love and to be loved seems simple. It is an art in itself. An art did we say? It is a philosophy, a theosophy, a pansophy in one. It is a science whereby the world, the flesh and the devil, the solar system,

the universe—including what little we know of it and all that we do not—are reduced to a single being.

Sometimes to two beings. Occasionally to three. But though that number is odd there is no luck in it. It is dangerous in addition to being inconvenient. You never have a spare moment, and are obliged to lie like a thief. Two are less exasperating. Even with one carefully selected being your hands are apt to be pretty full. When that being is legally your very own you will find it advantageous to confine your attentions to her. Anyway, it is generally admitted that it is better to have loved your wife than never to have loved at all.

These remarks, of course, are purely ethical. Love is not that by a long shot. Love is a vicious little chap. He is essentially selfish, and, though little, the biggest tyrant out. A statue is not more callous. A hyena is less cruel. Personally, we should prefer a cobra about the house. A cobra you can elude. But not a bore—with civility at least—and when that little chap is not sticking pins in you he rivals our best selling novelists in the art of boring you stiff.

These observations have a false air of origin-

ality which, as is our duty, we hasten to disclaim. They have all history for support. Out of mythology,—and even there apart from the account which Apuleius gave of Cupid and Psyche,—there is not a single story of happily begun and happily ending love. No, not one. As pages turn and faces emerge, always when they are not weeping they are yawning.

Why? Because love is not merely a philosophy. It is a poem whose strophes age cannot construe and youth cannot scan. Because of all subjects it is the most discussed and the least understood. Because it consists in the affection of someone else. Because affections are like slippers, they will wear out. Because the angel who at twenty appeals at thirty has been known to appal.

At the opera now and then you may, if you are in luck, hear Cherubino ask the ladies who stand about to tell him what love is. The ladies make no answer. Not because they are rude. Still less because they are ignorant. But because Mozart did not care to have them disturb the innocence of the lad with an aria to the effect that love is the fusion of two egotisms. Truth should be charming or else withheld.

Truth is the residuum of the sciences known

as exact. Among these sciences love, once upon a time, just escaped admittance. By way of compensation it was codified. What is more to the point, the code became law. Judgments in accordance therewith were rendered in courts open and plenary.

In 1907 these courts are to be revived. They are to be revived for the pleasure, it may be, but certainly for the instruction, of visitors to an exposition which is to be then held in Milan. You may have wondered what we were driving at. There is the reason of these remarks. There, too, is a tip for St Louis. There also, perhaps, is the model of the schooling which the youth of our country lack.

We inject that "perhaps" because we are sceptical by trade. But we live in hopes. Meanwhile, Milan being remote, 1907 far away, and St Louis uncertain, a summary of the instruction may contain a few hints.

The elements of this instruction are rumoured to have originated in Broceliande, a country which, as everybody knows, lies somewhere within the confines of the Arthurian myth. By whom they were evolved is undetermined. But it has been authoritatively suspected that they were cradled in the manuals of pure courtesy

with which chivalry was familiar and which society has forgot. Anyway, they once existed, and existing filtered into Provence, where a parliament of peeresses did them over into a pandect, of which the statutes survive. Here are some of them. By way of commentary we may note that licit means lawful, and illicit the reverse. There is nothing like making things clear. But oyez:

It is illicit to kiss and tell.

It is illicit to love anyone whom it would be illicit to marry.

It is illicit to love two at a time.

It is licit to be loved by two, by three, by any number.

It is illicit to be open-armed and close-fisted.

It is licit for a woman to love her husband—if she can.

It is illicit for a lover to do aught that might displease his lady.

It is licit for a lady to be less circumspect. Et cetera, and so forth.

These statutes, always candid, sometimes are profound. They disclose an understanding of the heart and its subtleties. It was over matters of this delicate nature that the Courts of Love claimed—and exercised—jurisdiction. The judges

were dames of high degree. At the time, in cases of tort and even of felony, the lord of a fief possessed the right of justice, high and low. But there are crimes now which the law cannot reach. It was the same way then. There were, and are, contentions which no mere male, however enfeffed, may adjust. It was to remedy this defect that the wives of the seigneurs erected tribunals of their own. Their strength was their weakness. They were pretty, and that appealed. They were patrician, and that appeased. They took themselves seriously too, and that must have been very satisfactory. Moreover, if not always clement, occasionally they were quaint.

Here is an instance. A confidant charged by a friend with messages of love found the young person so much to his taste that he addressed her in his own behalf. Instead of being repulsed his advances were encouraged. Whereupon the injured party brought suit. The prothonotary of the court relates that the plaintiff, having humbly prayed that the fraud be submitted to the Countess of Champagne, the latter, sitting in banco with sixty dames, heard the complaint, and after due deliberation handed down the following decision :—"It is ordered that the

defendants be henceforth debarred from the frequentation of honest people."

Here is another case. A knight was commanded by his lady not to say or do anything publicly in her praise. It so fell about that her name was lightly taken. The knight challenged the defamer. Thereupon the lady contended that he had forfeited all claim to her regard. Action having been brought the court decided that the defence of a lady is never illicit, and it was ordered that the knight be rehabilitated in favour and reinstated in grace. Which, the prothonotary avers, was done.

But how? There is the beautiful part of it. To the Courts of Love no sheriffs were attached. Judgments were enforced not by a constabulary but by the community. Disregard of a decision entailed not loss of liberty but loss of caste. In the case of a man there was exclusion from the field. Entrance was denied him at the tournaments. In the case of a woman the drawbridges were up. Throughout the land there was no one to receive her. As a result the delinquent was rare. So, too, was contempt of the jurists.

Such were the Courts of Love. Women then did more or less as they saw fit, and it was in order that they might do what was fittest that

those tribunals were established. They had another purpose. In guiding the affections they educated them. Women were admonished to love and instructed how to. They were taught, we will assume, that they who please generally fail to please profoundly. They were further taught, we will also assume, that to please profoundly a woman should never let herself be wholly known. Even in her kisses there should be mystery. Moreover, they were taught, or ought to have been, that when to mystery there be added uncertainty, and the two be sufficiently fused, then the party of the second part is not merely profoundly pleased but confoundedly perplexed. The poor devil does not know where he is at.

For of all things mystery and perplexity disturb the imagination most. Of all factors in an enduring affection the most potent is imagination. The woman who leaves a man nothing to bother about leaves him nothing to dread. Inconstancy is the result. The brute turns to pastures new.

But the woman of whom a man is never sure has him crazy about her for the rest of his wretched career. He feels that he could cut his throat for her. When a man does not feel that way he has no feeling at all.

Maxims of this fastidious morality were, we assume without effort, handed out in the Courts of Love. But pupils, however diligent, make mistakes. Though the decisions, decretals, and mandates of the courts were highly ethical, equitable also and instructive as well, occasionally misadventures occurred. Of these one which has been disinterred from a medieval manuscript may serve as instance. It runs as follows:—

“My Lord Raymond of Roussillon was a brave baron. His wife, the Lady Marguerite, was the fairest woman in the land, the most gifted and serene. It happened that William of Cabstaing, a poor knight’s son, came to the court of my Lord Raymond and asked that he be received as varlet there. My Lord Raymond, seeing that he was handsome and hardy, welcomed him and told him that he might remain. William did so, and comported himself so well that my lord made him page to my lady. Now it so fell about that one day the page composed for the Lady Marguerite the song which says:

“‘Sweet are the thoughts
Which love awakes in me.’

“When Raymond of Roussillon heard that

song he sent for William, led him far from the castle, cut off his head, put it in a basket, cut his heart out, and put it in the basket too. Then Raymond returned to the castle. He had the heart roasted and served at table to his wife, and made her eat it without knowing what it was. When the meal was over, Raymond stood up and told his wife that what she had eaten was the heart of the Knight William, and fetched and showed her the head, and asked her if the heart had tasted well. She understood what he said. She saw and recognised the head of the Knight William and, answering, she replied that the heart had been so good and appetising that never other food or other drink should take from her mouth the savour which it had left there. Raymond ran at her with his sword. She fled away, threw herself from a balcony, and broke her skull.

“All this was told throughout the realm of Aragon. The King Alphonse and all his barons and all his counts had great grief at the death of the knight and of the lady whom Raymond had so abominably destroyed. They made war on him, and having taken him and his castle, and slain him there, the King Alphonse erected at Perpignan a monument to William and to

Marguerite, and all perfect lovers prayed for their souls."

A gentleman never sees or hears anything that was not intended for him. The lesson in pure courtesy which Raymond got from Alphonse was well deserved. But it was insufficient. He should have had his ghost kicked. At the same time, if episodes such as that are to be given in the revival of the Courts of Love, we would not miss it for a farm.

XVI

BLUEBEARD

IN the music-maddened nights of a generation ago there was imported for the benefit of old New Yorkers, who then were young, a little dish. The importation was effected, and served too perhaps, by way of finish to the banquets of delight which the opera seria provided. The dish was "Barbe Bleue." It was light and palatable. It suggested nothing so much as cream beaten with champagne into an ethereal foam. It left none of the after taste of truffles and red pepper which the more gorgeous fare produced. It expressed, as music should, that which cannot be told and concerning which it is impossible to be silent. Yet, though it charmed, it did not satisfy. It surprised and evoked. For who was this chimerically-bearded prince, who sang so deliciously and behaved so ill, who married and murdered so melodiously? From what land did he come? And was it all real or was it romance?

These problems shuttled the score. At this late date we can hardly look back and swear that they kept us awake, but with due regard to that love of truth which is our main consolation we may conscientiously affirm that, in the pauses of later interludes, they returned, as problems will return, demanding solution, exacting research, until, now, here at last, they are to have their way.

For Bluebeard was no more a creation of Offenbach—or for that matter of Perrault—than Don Juan was a creation of Mozart or even of Molière. These two great figures really lived, yet Bluebeard the more astonishingly. According to the documents contained in what is technically known as his *procès-verbal*—on which, parenthetically, our friend and brother-in-letters, J. K. Huysmans, some time since laid violent hands—his name was Gilles de Retz, and, at a period contemporaneous to the apparition of Jeanne d'Arc, he was seigneur of the domain of Tiffauges and, therewith, *seigneur de lieux dont j'ignore le compte*.

The domain of Tiffauges squats in an edge of Brittany. The manor is still there. Its towers have tottered, the moat is choked, the drawbridge has crumbled. But the massive wings

of the keep—festooned with lichens and astringed with moss—extend intact. The interior rhymes with the walls. There are high baronial halls, contracted cells, narrow corridors, a stairway which cavalry could mount, other stairs precipitately spiral, a circular gallery where the guard was stationed, a chapel in which a choir sang, a silence which you can feel, an odour of ruin, a sensation of chill, a savour of things dead and damned, an impression of space, of shapes of sin, of monstrous crimes, of sacrilege and sorcery.

To-day the castle is a skeleton. Yet in the days that were it must have been sumptuously if strangely splendid, a succession of elaborate suites hung with exquisite tapestries, furnished with that art which only the fifteenth century knew, set with combinations of woods, colours, leathers, silks, and metals, decorated with amazing frescoes, with scenes of pagan love and pastoral affections. There, amid the blare of fanfares and the swirl of plumes, Gilles de Retz held court and, while he was about it, other things too.

The chronicles of the day unite in describing him as insolently rich and alarmingly good-looking, a fine chap, a brave soldier, un-

fathomably devout, serving featly his God and loyally his king—so loyally that at the tolerably adolescent age of twenty-five Charles VII. created him Marshal of France. The point to be noted, though, is that devoutness. At the time an epidemic of mysticism, induced by the occurrences connected with Jeanne d'Arc—with whom, by the way, he had assisted at the siege of Orleans—infected the doct. It infected Gilles. The fever of it accentuated his fervour. He surrounded himself with prelates, enlarged his choir, alternated between mass and meditation, aspired to union with the supersensible, imitated the inimitable life.

Existence then was not what it had been before or what it had since become. For noblesse oblige read noblesse negligé. The lords and gentry were lack-lustre brutes, ignorant as carps, without other aims than dice, without other ambitions than brawls. Gilles de Retz had as much in common with them as they had with him. He was a scholar, a musician, and a poet. In an age in which no one read he wrote. In an age in which the best music was the click of swords he preferred the hum of harps. In an age in which the foremost diversion was drink he collected curious missals, startling gems, and sur-

prising birds. Within the moat pink flamingoes brooded and about it white peacocks flocked. He delighted in the conversation of thinkers, in the observations of artists, in the subtleties of metaphysicians. In his large and splendid castle he entertained magnificently all who came, providing not merely open house, but the spectacle of a great noble living nobly, a prince properly presented, one who had his own men-at-arms, his own garrison, and therewith pages, squires, knights, deans, vicars, choristers, and, above and beyond these, the right of justice high and low.

To-day the castle crouches sullenly. In the meagre hamlet at its base there are women who cross themselves at mention of its former lord. To them he is Barbe Bleue. Not the Bluebeard of the lyric stage nor yet the Bluebeard of the fairy tale, but the monster who maltreated and murdered.

It is the opinion of thinkers that the conscious gratification of the senses is an unconscious flight toward the ideal, that the most poignant excesses are engendered by a desire for the impossible, by aspirations for that felicity which is superterrestrial and divine. These premises accepted, it may be then that the gulf of blood

which Gilles proceeded to undike is susceptible of explanation. But what was his own excuse? Or rather, by what sudden steps was the mystic converted into a reptile? The question seems complex. The answer is simple. It will be found in the limitations of wealth. During the progress of the war for which he had furnished troops, during the leisures of court, where in his quality of great noble he had advanced sums more or less imposing, and during the prodigalities at Tiffauges, where he resided in a fashion entirely regal, his patrimony had become tolerably fluid.

In an effort to maintain the splendour to which he was accustomed, he mortgaged fiefs, bartered farms, alienated domains, and even put jewels in pawn. His heirs took fright. Charles was petitioned to interfere. As a result, by letters patent Gilles de Retz was inhibited from further disposing of his property, and there suddenly was this sumptuous individual literally without a copper.

In epochs more modern and recent, individuals less sumptuous, perhaps, but equally prodigal, have found themselves in a similar plight. To remedy it some have taken to trade, some have taken to stocks. None of these avenues was

open to Bluebeard. But at the time there was another and a wider one, an immense highway descending from the remotest past, but which latterly had dwindled into a blind alley with a dead wall at the end. In it was a group of savans, a congress of the wise men and charlatans of the day. Gilles joined them. Or, to be exact, those whom he could he lured to Tiffauges.

These people were called hermetics. They were in search of the alkahest which Hermes discovered and which had enabled the satraps of eld to create enchantments which the world no longer knows, to erect at will cities fairer than the uplands of dream, palaces more luminous than the twelve signs of the zodiac, and with them shimmering retrospects of paradise. The escaping memories of that alkahest Caligula had tried in vain to detain. Bacon sought them in alembics, Thomas Aquinas in ink.

Experiments not similar, but cognate, had resulted in the theory that at that later day success was impossible without the intervention and direct assistance of the Very Low. The secret had escaped too far, memories of it had been too long ablated, to be rebeckoned by natural means. For the recovery of the evapor-

ated arcana it was necessary that Satan should be evoked.

Satan at that time was very real. The atmosphere was so heavy with his legions that spitting was an act of worship. In the gloom of the abbeys legates of his shouted tauntingly at the cowering monks: "Thou art damned!" In the cathedrals, through shudders of song, his voice had been heard inviting maidens to swell the red quadrilles of hell. From encountering him at every turn society had become used to his ways, and had imagined that pact whereby, in exchange for the soul, Satan agrees to furnish whatever is wanted.

For the sake of gold into that pact Gilles presently prepared to enter. The crucibles, retorts, aludels, and furnaces which the alchemists unpacked at Tiffauges cooked nothing which savoured, however slightly, of the alkahest. They were repacked, the alchemists dismissed, and, from the confines of the Sabbat, into the manor magicians trooped. Either the Very Low was then evoked or else they lied basely. It will be said that they lied. But may not the evocation of Satan consist less in actual apparition than in suffering evil to enter the heart, in suffering it to batten there until

it has gnawed the finer fibres away, until it has made us as base as we have conceived Satan to be?

Something of that kind must have occurred in this horrible keep. Gilles De Retz became really possessed. Alchemy failing, the soul of the mystic turned a somersault, and where the saint had been the vampire emerged.

"There is," he announced, "no one on the planet who has dared what I have done." We believe him. It was under his hand that the real massacre of the innocents occurred. Satan was supposed to enjoy the blood of the young, and to minister to that taste Gilles killed boys and girls, stalking them as another stalks game. In eight years he bagged eight hundred. More perhaps, for he had not kept tally.

Meanwhile the country was devastated. Wherever he passed shepherds vanished and school-girls disappeared. His first victim was a little boy, whose heart he extracted, whose wrists he severed, whose eyes he dug out, and with whose blood he wrote an invocation to Satan. Then the list elongated immeasurably. That lair of his echoed with cries, dripped with gore, shuddered with sobs. The subterranean passages were turned into cemeteries, the high

walls reeked with the odour of burning bones, and through them Bluebeard prowled, a virtuoso and vampire in one, conjecturing how he might destroy not merely bodies but souls, inventing fresh repasts of flesh, devising new tortures, savouring tears as yet unshed, and with them the spectacle of helpless agony, of unutterable fear, the contortions of little limbs, simultaneously subjected to hot irons and cold steel. It is said that some of the children cried very little but that the colour passed from their eyes.

There is a limit to all things earthly. Precisely as no one may attain perfection, so has sin its bounds. There are depths beneath which there is nothing deeper. To their ultimate plane Gilles de Retz descended. There, smitten perhaps with terror, he considered the possibility of groping back through penitent acts, pious endowments, and nights of prayer.

It was too late, however. The echo of the cries with which the castle rang had reverberated beyond. The odour of the calcinated had filtered through the land. The anguish of parents fused with these things, and so insistently that the conjunction of clamours and stench reached Nantes, with, for result, the

besieging of Tiffauges, the taking of Gilles, his arrest, imprisonment, public confession—a confession so monstrous that women fainted of fright, and a priest, rising in horror, veiled the face on a crucifix which hung from the wall—a confession followed by excommunication and the stake. *Et ainsi fini l'histoire de Barbe Bleue.*

Yet where in this super-Neronian history is Barbe Bleue? Surely Gilles de Retz is not the charming prince who married and murdered so melodiously? Surely he is not the Bluebeard whom we met in the nursery and who warned his wife not to see anything which was not intended for her; surely, in spite of certain vagaries, that noble hero was not this ignoble hyena.

And yet he was. Legend takes strange licences. Sometimes he will so smear a seraph that he will look like a fiend, and again it will make a villain look highly virtuous. Tiberius, we are convinced, never dreamed of the infamies which are imputed to him, and had the ghost of Washington any sense of humour, which is doubtful, it would be rather amused at the veneration in which his memory is held.

It was much the same thing with Gilles de Retz. The legend regarding him fattened on frescoes instead of on facts. Some years ago, in a Breton church which dates from the thirteenth century, there was found a series of mural paintings. In one you behold the marriage of a noble demoiselle to an equally noble seigneur. In the next there is the same seigneur. He is leaving his castle, and as he goes he entrusts to his wife a little key. The scenes which follow represent the lady peering into a room from the rafters of which six women hang. Then come the return of the lord, his questioning and menacing glance, the tears of the lady, her prayers to her sister, the alarm of the latter, the interruption of her brothers, and her rescue from sudden death.

The story which the frescoes tell still endures in Brittany. There is many another like it. One and all have Gilles de Retz for hero. Yet for the honour of his race, instead of his name, that of Bluebeard has been given.

So, at least, says Michelet. Michelet usually knew what he was talking about. He devoted forty years to his history of France. When he finished it he sighed and said: "I have swallowed too many vipers, too many kings."

Gilles de Retz must have been one of the former. In any event, Michelet had at his disposal texts which we lack. Lacking the texts, we lack also pretexts for differing with him. We assume, therefore, that it is as he has explained it. Moreover, other historians, otherwise competent, have stated that Gilles, after marrying Catherine de Thouars, one of the great heiresses of the day, subsequently and successively became the husband of six other women — a circumstance which, the frescoes aiding, doubtless suggested to Perrault the tale with which we are all familiar and from which Offenbach wove his enchanting score.

Yet whether he murdered those women, or whether they just died of delight, we have now no means of knowing. What we do know is that this vampire really lived, and that his lair any tourist may visit.

In considering it, even the indifferent must wonder how such a contradiction could be, how it is possible that a man could alternately charm and torture, pray, and deprave. The complexity, however, is common enough. It is due to what novelists call heredity, what psychologists term dual personality, and plain people the Old Adam. More or less, and generally more than

less, it exists in us all. Its home is the brain. In the majority of civilised beings it is, through one factor or another, subordinated and controlled, sometimes forgotten, more often ignored. But it is there. And when, through the shock of atoms, the play of destiny, excess of fatigue or cerebral commotion, the other, the inherited, the secreted self appears, then from the individual ordinarily normal emerges the human reptile.

Such is Bluebeard's case. Such, too, perhaps is the meaning of the archaic allegory which symbolised the struggle between Darkness and Light.

XVII

THE KNIGHTS OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE

THE Golden Fleece is just like the Garter. It has none of the confounded nonsense of merit about it. Medieval and magnificent, it was originated by Philip of Burgundy. Why he originated it no one knows. A German tried to find out. He devoted the whole of his wretched life to the subject. On his death-bed he chattered "Eureka." It had driven him insane.

Students less pertinacious, and possibly better equipped, have assumed that the motive was wholly gallant. Philip, to his eternal glory be it recorded, paid what we think we have seen described as addresses to twenty-four young women at once. Then came the twenty-fifth. The latter was Ysabel of Portugal. Meanwhile, from each of the others he had obtained coils of hair. These he had his coiffeur braid together into a sort of conglomerate souvenir. Through

it there straggled an amber curl; it had come from the bright blonde locks of Marie of Rumbrugge. The sheen of it delighted him. From it, from that girl's empty head, the idea of the Golden Fleece emerged. On the occasion of his marriage to Ysabel thirty knights were chosen. Whether he required that, like himself, they should be *sans pudeur et avec reproches*, we may surmise yet never know.

What we do know is that self-chosen knights of a different order with the same name have been parading about ever since. In philosophic circles their order is generally, if figuratively, regarded as the insignia of the carpet highway-men and other adventurers with whom the great capitals of this little globe abound.

High on the list of them is Lauzun. Insolent, indigent, and illiterate, the son of a nonentity at that, he yet managed to make himself Marshal of France and the husband of the Grande Mademoiselle. And not merely her husband, but her master, ordering that princess, who was the cousin of one king and the granddaughter of another, to pull off his boots, and beating her when she refused. The story of his career would read as a romance were it not that from it the probable is absent. Men do not dream any more

as that man lived. Emerging obscurely from an obscure hamlet, the high road led him to Versailles, and chance into the presence of the king.

There he made himself so entertaining that the fourteenth Louis raised the adventurer from one grade to another, and so monumentally, that one day, angered at the withdrawal of a promised promotion, he whipped out his sword, broke it across his knee, and tossing it with a fine clatter at the feet of the king, bawled loudly that it was disgraceful to serve a monarch who could not keep his word.

Women admire the brave, but they prefer the audacious. Some women at least, and Mademoiselle de Montpensier was one of them. The melodrama of the proceeding delighted her. Archroyal and super-rich, possessed in her own right of twenty million and four duchies, she was then thirty and passably disillusioned. By reason of her birth and wealth she had expected to be queen. She had had her eye on the Dauphin, another on the King of Spain, both on the Emperor Ferdinand III. Yet none whatever for Charles II., who, in his exile, had asked, and who, because of that exile, had been refused.

Heights appeal to women, so do extremes

Failing a throne, the Grande Mademoiselle resolved to accept a footstool. Lauzun appealed to her as even the closed crown of state had not. The adventurer understood it thoroughly. But at every step she made toward him he retreated two. He could have asked and it would have been given. He preferred to be asked and to accord. Finally he did. So also did Louis. At the formal request of the lady he consented to the mesalliance, and there was this nobody almost lifted into royalty—almost, yet not quite. For reasons which we won't bother over, the king withdrew his consent. Lauzun was thrown into prison, whence he issued years later, and then only because of the supplications of the princess whom he had bewitched, who then became his wife, whom he ordered to pull off his boots, and who, annoyed perhaps at the beatings which she got, gathered her millions and her duchies and left him to twirl his thumbs. There you have a true picture of the untrue knight.

An instance more modern and rather more modest is that of Baron Harden-Hickey. Born in San Francisco, the son of eminently respectable yet perfectly plain people, he evolved, entirely to their astonishment, and perhaps a

little to his own, a dream of monarchy. His title astonished also. Where he got it no one knew and, except the police, no one, to our knowledge, ever asked. It may be that the Comte de Chambord, whose henchman he had been, gave it to him, or, as is more likely, it may be that it was self-bestowed. After all, why not? In any event, a dozen years ago he acquired, in addition to the title, the formidable reputation of being one of the wittiest men in Paris and the crack duellist of France. A poet at his hours and always a scholar, he was doubly dangerous. His pen stung as promptly as did his sword. As a consequence he was well supplied with enemies. He had more than he knew by sight. But their quality was superior. A stranger to them, he was a stranger to his friends, a stranger to himself, yet most conspicuously a stranger to his epoch. He was at odds with it. In an age less complex he would have been a pirate, and a very good pirate too. He was a survival, as lost on the boulevards as a corsair would be. He had beliefs in an epoch which had dissipated them and faiths in a land from which they have gone. Therewith he was antithesis made man. He edited a comic paper and wrote a book on metaphysics. He looked

like a musketeer, acted like a debutante, talked like Aristophanes, and lived like a sage.

That was a long time ago. Presently from Catholic he turned Buddhist. At Andilly, a Parisian suburb, where he had a country house which he called a castle, he built a temple, decorated it with the lotus, installed the wheel of prayers, and entertained Colonel Olcott. After Buddha he took to Voltaire. Restless as a panther, haunted by the past, pursued by visions of Chambord, he needed a cause or a flag. It was the inability to find either which brought to him the dream of founding a monarchy for himself. "There is nothing worth living for," he once confided to the deponent, "and, what is worse, nothing worth dying for either." But that, too, is a long time ago. It was on a journey to the United States that he met a young heiress, who subsequently became his wife. Then, out of idleness, or perhaps to amuse his bride, he wrote a tract on suicide. Hardly had it issued from the press before an idea of a monarchy was hatched. He proposed to establish a kingdom at Trinidad—a speck of an island off the coast of Brazil—and proposed also to establish himself there as king. Entirely opera bouffe, he entered into the scheme with a seriousness which im-

pressed even himself. He had a chancellerie in New York, another in London. Then the Powers intervened, or he said they did, and he turned an eye on Hawaii. But at this juncture annexation occurred; there was not a possible throne in sight, and like a true Knight of the Fleece, he shot himself.

But he shot himself too soon. It is one of the disadvantages of death that it prevents the departed from participating in the possibilities of life. Had he waited he might have been king. There was a throne then vacant, a throne ramshackle, remote, and ridiculous, yet none the less a throne, one that had been founded by just such another, by an adventurer who began by being French, ended by being German, and who managed to make himself an American monarch in between—a South American monarch indeed, yet still a monarch, monarch of Araucania, a land which he ruled under the style and title of Aurelius I.

Who he was, how he got there, above all, why he wanted to be, and in what fashion he succeeded in becoming, king, are matters that have been, and now always will be, problematic. It is known that his name was De Tonniens, but other data are scarce. It is rumoured, however,

that in the early sixties he set sail from Havre for Peru. With him went a cargo of umbrellas. As it never rains in Peru, what he did with the umbrellas is conjectural in the extreme. Perhaps he took them to Chili. In any event, ultimately he reached Araucania. That is the one stretch of territory on this hemisphere which neither Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, nor English have ever been able to subdue. A portion of it Chili has gobbled, but the larger part is independent still. Whether the umbrellas appealed to the fantasy of the Araucos, and whether because of them they allowed De Tonniens to constitute himself king, is immaterial. But that king he became is history. It is history, too, that as a means of livelihood he instituted a series of titles and decorations, which he took to Europe and peddled about. The supply of these things being greater than the demand, poverty overtook him and he died. Meanwhile, he had not neglected to establish a court. According to a recent explorer—M. Henri le Baux—the Court of Araucania still exists. What is more, the throne, though vacant, exists as well. There would be a chance for Harden-Hickey. There yet is a chance for any other knight.

Examples such as the foregoing are useful

if for no other reason than because they show the relativeness of things. To be born, as Lauzun was, a nobody and to marry a princess, predicates charm. To be born, as Harden-Hickey was, a plain American, and to dream of being king, predicates romance. To be born, as De Tonniens was, a bourgeois, and to develop into a monarch, predicates enterprise. But to be born a slave and to become an emperor shows originality.

Solouque did that. He began life with a dust-pan and ended it with a sceptre. At the age of fifty he was a valet, very fat, very black, ignorant as a carp, unable to read, unable to write. But though unable to write he could make his mark—and did. Caught on the crest of a Haytian revolution, he flung himself from it into power. On his return after some sable Marengo the president of the local senate capped him with a crown of pasteboard and saluted him Faustin I.

Solouque sent to Paris for a real crown, sent for two—the second for the drab who was his consort; and, while he was about it, sent for thrones, for robes of ermine—all the tra-la-la of state. Therewith he instituted a civil list, a series of decorations, and created Knights of the Ebon Fleece. The court chamberlain was the Duc de Bonbon; the lords-in-waiting, three in

number, were gratified respectively with the titles of Prince of Watermelon, Marquis of Lemonade, and Viscount of Ice Cream. Their share in the budget was placed at a hundred gourds per annum. When they asked for it this Philip of Hayti had them shot. If open-handed he was close-fisted. One day he held a review of his grenadiers. Georges d'Alaux, a writer who was there at the time and who has left a book on this Offenbach monarchy, states that the helmets of the guard glittered with plaques, on which was inscribed: "Sardines à l'huile, Barton et Cie, Marseilles." Like the emperor, the grenadiers were unable to read. Presently it was discovered that they were unable to fight. Projected against neighbours by whom they were demolished, Solouque said it was good riddance. Thereat, to while away the time, he created more decorations, more nobility, parodied the coronation of Napoleon, ordered a general massacre, abdicated, fled away and died, full of years and dishonours, grotesque to the end.

Of an order quite as grotesque, yet a trifle more recent, was De Rougemont, a Frenchman who spoke English with a German accent, and who, after an alleged thirty-year residence on the Sea of Timor, turned up not long ago in

the columns of a magazine. According to his own account he must have been born with an honest imagination and a love of misadventure, for, according to that same account, fate conducted him to a coral reef and left him there with but a dog and a New Testament. The former he appears to have preferred to any human being he ever met, while the theological difficulties which he encountered in the latter seem to have fully occupied his leisure. For amusement he rode turtles, steering them with kicks in the eye, built a house of pearl shells, made a hammock of shark's hide, and played pirate with pelicans, whom he robbed of their fish. For visitors he had parrots, for almanacs, stones. And so the years fell by. Ultimately savages appeared, who, on beholding him, fancied that they were all dead and that he was the Great Spirit. If that is not an example of honest imagination, one may wonder what is. Yet here is more. Conducted by the aborigines to the mainland, he there became king of the tribe, rescued white girls from black men, discovered gullies of gold and ditches of diamonds, conciliated recalcitrant cannibals by throwing handsprings and somersaults, found a newspaper, read in it that the deputies of Alsace had refused

to vote in the German Parliament, marvelled thereat, for he knew nothing of the war of 1870, and, as much perplexed by political enigmas as he had been by theological difficulties, left sceptre, diamonds, gold, and girls behind, made for Melbourne, shipped for London before the mast, and turned up safe and sound in the office of an English magazine.

Everything being possible, it was conjectured that the story might all be true. The north-western corner of Australia, where, as king, he had resided, is a region still unexplored. Moreover, was not Bruce disbelieved and Du Chaillu flouted? The eccentricity of the story consisted in the fact that a gentleman who reached Melbourne with such first-class copy in his head should have been compelled to work his way to London. *Mais nul n'est prophete*. The story of R. Crusoe de Rougemont-Munchausen was at least entertaining enough to find favour in the eyes of the British Association, and his hand-spring device for charming the enemy may, with entire deference, still be commended to Lord Roberts for future use at the front.

Meanwhile, it is pleasant to note that in a subsequent issue of the periodical in which Mr Alice de Rougemont first told of his adventures in

wonderland there appeared a caveat to the effect that the editors no longer vouched for his veracity. It were difficult to be more circum-spect and less rude. Elsewhere he was labelled Psalmanazar. But the label, though meant to be fierce, was merely stupid. De Rougemont gulled the British Association. Psalmanazar gulled Great Britain. By the press at large De Rougemont was received with cheerful incredulity. The learned reviews swallowed Psalmanazar whole. De Rougemont produced a new edition of the Australian Nights, Psalmanazar produced a new language, a literature, and a religion. To this day nobody knows what Psalmanazar's real name was. What is De Rougemont's real name nobody cares.

Psalmanazar represented himself as a Japanese from Formosa. He published a book which contained an alphabet of his own manufacture, portraits of false gods, pictures of fictitious people, and with them engravings of imaginary shrines. It was accepted as gospel. In his memoirs Psalmanazar says: "I was but twenty and I deceived all England." The Bishop of London became his patron. He lectured at Oxford, took orders, and everything else he could get. But then, a century and a half ago, in the good old

days when he lived and lied, knowledge was limited and the earth was not. Had De Rougemont come then his success might have been proportionate, and yet again it might not. Success is an uncertain quantity. One never knows whom it will visit and whom avoid. Keely is a case in point. A moralist recommended that nothing but good should be said of the dead. The advice is excellent. We have no intention of disregarding it. An ex-waiter who, with nothing more complicated than a half-dozen neologisms and as many concealed tubes, could extract five million out of the pockets of his fellow-citizens deserves something better than abuse. He deserves enrolment among the Knights of the Fleece. He deserves even, what we lack the space to give him, a full biographical page. In days when speech was more abstruse he would have been called a thaumaturge. Thaumaturgy is at once simple and complex. It consists in making a stranger feel at home and then in taking that home away. There are a number of books about it. Of these the best bear big names. They are signed by Albertus Magnus, by Nostradamus, and by Paracelsus. They are not uninteresting either. They tell of the great secret which is the philosopher's stone

and how, with it, metals cannot be transmuted but how pocket-books may. More or less, and generally more than less, every Knight of the Fleece knows its charms. Apollonius of Tyana knew them thoroughly. He knew other things as well. He knew all languages, including that of Silence, for silence is a language too. It was in the latter that Keely conversed. So subtle was his use of it that nobody understood. He eluded comprehension. There was his secret. It is the great secret of all. It is the secret of not having any, and yet in appearing to, which constitutes the philosopher's stone. With it Keely charmed experts. But who are so foolish as wise men? Had Keely come a few centuries earlier, by the wise men of the day he would have been deified. Such is luck, or rather, such is destiny.

For the Gates of Life are double. On the one stands written Too Late. On the other Too Soon. Between them chaps like these get strangled.

XVIII

THE UPPER CIRCLES

THE Supreme Court of Pennsylvania has decided that a belief in spiritualism does not predicate insanity.

It would be curious if it did. In this country there are millions who believe in it. In Europe there are others. In Asia there are more. For all we know to the contrary there are a lot in Africa. If not, there ought to be. It was in Africa that spiritualism originated.

Moses found it there. He found it in the crypts of Memphis. These crypts were difficult to enter. But Moses, whose real name, by the way, was Hosarisph, happened to be a nephew of old Rameses. The relationship was a pull. It opened for him doors which otherwise would have been closed. Behind them he heard all about spiritualism.

It will not pay you to hunt for evidence of

this in that part of the Bible which is associated with him. The evidence is not there. Nor in it, either, is there any doctrine of a future life. These things were not given to everybody. They were reserved for the few.

Among the latter were the priests. The priests had three ways of expressing a given idea. The first was ordinary and simple, the second complex and symbolic, the third hieroglyphic and abstruse. Any term used by them had, therefore, a triple signification. It could be construed naturally, figuratively, or transcendently.

It was in their language that the Mosaic views were originally expressed. When, later, they were put into Phœnician; when, from that, they were turned into Chaldaic; and when, subsequently, the latter was translated into Greek, the original meaning had gone. There had been too many cooks. St Jerome, who knew pretty much all that was going and a good deal that was not, said of the residue that it contained as many secrets as words, and that each word held several. It is for this reason that the Pentateuch nowhere exhibits any evidence of spiritualism—

any evidence, either, of a doctrine of a future life.

These things were secret things, and secret things, Moses expressly declared, belong to the Lord.

In Egypt, where he found them, crouched the Sphinx. Above was the Phoenix. In the one was the key to things terrestrial. In the other was a clue to things divine. The Sphinx expounded the mystery of life. The Phoenix explained the enigma of death.

Moses took them both. But he did not display them. In their perspectives were heights and abysses. On the heights were immensities; in the abysses, worlds. They held categories greater than the average mind may comfortably contemplate. As a consequence the doctrine, withheld from the many, was reserved for the few.

The reconstruction of the doctrine—a reconstruction relatively recent—is due to causes so opposed that they laugh in each other's faces. The first is criticism higher than that which is known as high; the second is experimental psychology. The former has conducted us behind the accepted meaning of phrases; the latter has led us to the threshold of another sphere.

Through the highest criticism obscurities have become limpid. Through experimental psychology a door has been thrown open on the invisible and the respectability of atheism shocked.

We fail to see why. Demonstrations, however surprising, ought not to shock. Only ignorance should. Yet if it hurt, too, how many there are that would yell. Besides, though it may be more cheerful to be wrong in your beliefs than not to have them at all, it is perhaps a mistake to regard errors as assets.

But far be it from us to seem to even wish to convert. The spirit of proselytism is not in us. At present writing only the desire to show the sanity of spiritualism is. That sanity has for basis premises major and minor, with a deduction for astragal.

Here are the premises: First is the cautiousness of nature. Nature neither adds nor subtracts. She does not increase her possessions. She does not diminish them. She puts them up, pulls them down, and does them over anew. But on to the lot she holds very tight.

It is for this reason that what seems to us to

constitute death is to nature but the constituent of a change. It is for this reason, because nothing dies. Because when what is called death occurs there ensues not a cessation of energy but a liberation of it. A tenement has crumbled and a tenant gone forth. Though just where is the puzzle.

It would be convenient to say that that puzzle was solved long ago. It would be convenient, but inexact. Myriads of people who like to have others do their thinking have pinned their faith on a residence right overhead. The existence and accessibility of that residence they have regarded as a universal belief.

It is not a universal belief. Even if it were the fact would prove nothing. Every universal belief is erroneous. Public opinion is the stupidity of one multiplied by the stupidity of all. The majority is always cocksure and dead wrong. The belief in that residence is a case in point.

Primitive fabulists erected an edifice of dream, which they catalogued Creation. It was composed of a cellar, a groundfloor, and a roof garden. On the groundfloor man lived, moved, and had his being. Then, according to his be-

haviour, he was tossed into the cellar or shoved into a lift and shot to the roof.

The idea had its charms and also its deceptions. It was simple, but not scientific. Science has shown that the earth stands to creation as a drop of water does to the sea. It has shown that within the relatively narrow sphere to which observation is at present confined there are not less than three hundred million worlds. These worlds we may assume do not revolve there just for the fun they may get out of their own gymnastics. We may further assume that the energy loosed among them cannot be dissimilar to that which is recognisable here. By way of corollary we may also assume that there, too, are sentient beings.

There are the premises. They hold, we hope, nothing not sane. For that matter, nothing, we hope, that can in any way be construed into originality. They are but the platitudes of logic. Now for the deduction.

If the premises be accepted, and with them the theorem, that man has not fallen from loftier estate, but is rising to one, it follows, or seems to follow, that not the dwellers on

this planet alone, but those strewn throughout the universe, are en route for higher things. In which event it is advantageous to know what our individual chances are of reaching them. That knowledge spiritualism supplies.

Spiritualism has been much abused. The abuse is righteous. As often as otherwise when spiritualism is not perfect rot it is fraudulent commercialism. Yet commerce is not conducted solely by cheats. There are honest men everywhere, even in jail. Even in spiritualism there are scientists. Their statements may be derided. But so were the initial statements concerning the telephone. So was the proclamation of wireless telegraphy. Such derision is helpful. It is a bountiful Providence that has enabled us to despise whatever we do not understand. And spiritualism, even to its believers, perhaps particularly to its believers, leaves a good deal in the dark. That also is a dispensation of Providence. Were spiritualism able to solve every problem, we who cogitate for the distraction which cogitation affords would have nothing left to do but to bore ourselves stiff.

Anything of that kind would be very distressing.

Meanwhile, general distrust of spiritualism has been due not merely to the puerility and trickery of its manifestations but to the fact that the majority of us believe like brutes in the reality of things.

Of all illusions reality is the greatest. Everybody knows, for instance, that flowers grow, but nobody has ever heard them at it. That is only because our ears are not adapted to receive the vibrations. Were they so adapted the noise of growing flowers would be thunderous. Yet because we are not deaf we do not believe it. None the less the vibrations are. In the same way, because we are not blind we imagine that there can be nothing which is not obvious. It is the obvious only that is illusory.

"Ghosts!" cried Carlyle. "Nigh a thousand million of them walk the earth at noontide." Ocular evidence of the promenade being lacking we could wish a little proof. That proof spiritualism supplies. It is voluminously provided in the reports of the Society for Psychical Research. But, though voluminous, it is not always luminous. The facts displayed are

appallingly trite. Yet they are facts all the same, and though trite, so, too, were the rotting logs which once upon a time Columbus beheld. Beyond those logs was another world.

From the world which spiritualism is approaching already one discovery is announced. One is a great many. In the present condition of things it is even enormous. For in this discovery — a discovery rigorously examined, patiently tested, and scientifically indorsed—is the assurance, positive and unequivocal, that human personality persists beyond the tomb.

A discovery of that magnitude and certainty means something. Moreover, in it there are others. Or, rather, from it data depend. For though the persistence of personality is shown, as yet nothing has been adduced which confirms accepted ideas of heaven, nothing in support of any existing creed.

That seems odd. But where all is marvellous the marvellous disappears. The phenomena detected defy explanation. They defy refutation as well. There is, though, nothing odd in that. The phenomena of thought do the same. The latter are so common and familiar that we give them no heed. Yet the human

being has never lived who understood them. That is pretty much the way it is with psychic phenomena. Because we cannot understand them it does not in the least follow that they cannot be.

On the contrary. Moreover, in reference to them Sir William Crookes has spoken thusly: "I do not say that such things may be. I say that such things are."

Sir William is not a crank. He is not a poet. He is passionless as algebra, precise as calculus, and the foremost chemist going. He is somebody. In the course of explorations conducted by him along the frontier of the other world he has officially announced that he has been the percipient of direct communications, the beholder of phantom forms. One of the latter, a young woman, decorated his coat with a rose, gave him a lock of her hair, allowed him to snapshot her, and sat in his lap. It were difficult to be more sociable.

Instances similar, cognate, and still more curious you may fish from the reports by the ton. Unless you prefer to regard the testimony as a mystification devised by a corps of savans and scientists for no other purpose than your

hocus-pocussing, then, though the testimony be hard to swallow, it is just as hard to reject. But that which may help a bit to get it down is the fact that the deponents go as far as they can, but not an inch or the fraction of an inch farther. They are enabled to demonstrate the persistence of consciousness after death and the visibility of the unseen. But not the immortality of the soul.

The reason, if complex, is clear. Travellers returning from the upper circles bring with them only what they took. Only that and their experience in transit. Their understanding is not broadened. Their wisdom is not increased. They know as little of what is beyond them as we know of what is beyond us. When you come to think of it that is in the nature of things. A trip across the country never develops faculties which the traveller lacked when he set out. It is probable, therefore, that death is but a posting-house, where horses are changed, and whence you proceed with such luggage as you brought.

But whither you proceed, and whether in proceeding you get very far, fraudulent spiritualism may pretend to tell, but scientific spiritualism

cannot. To borrow a metaphor from the land from which we started, the veil of Isis remains unraised. For these are the secret things of which Moses told. To us only the visible is permitted.

Summarily, then, the decision of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is all right. Belief in the matters herewith submitted does not predicate insanity. That proposition is incontrovertible. But not the converse of it. Insanity may proceed from the belief.

XIX

THE MODES OF TO-MORROW

SOMEBODY or other, an archbishop, perhaps, declared with obvious regret that a woman gowned in the height of fashion possesses a serenity of mind joined to an elevation of spirit which the consolations of religion are incompetent to provide.

We have not a doubt of it. But in what does fashion consist? Women have been known to state that they would rather be dead than out of it, yet when a definition was sought no adequate description could be obtained. For it is one of the charms of women that in explaining everything they explain nothing. That is quite as it should be. It is for them to exhilarate and for us to expound. Yet of their clothes we know little. A little is a great deal. But in a matter such as this no mere man may know much. It is even discomfoting to reflect that when the hour comes in which

all secrets are revealed Fashion may resolve into Isis still unveiled.

Meanwhile, to the masculine eye at least, the vagaries of it are as recondite as the forecasts of the weather. The mysteries of time and space—mysteries so mysterious that science has reduced them to figments of fancy—are not more enigmatic.

Perhaps, then, it will be safe to say that fashion is an active abstraction—a phrase which does not mean anything, but which sounds very well. In any event, it is a form of debauchery of which the door is closed to man. There are exceptions, however. The deponent has seen six-footers loll about and admire their hunting togs. And there are other instances. There is, for example, a certain marquis and there is also a certain clergyman. The former one day was standing bareheaded in Lincoln & Bennett's, waiting to be waited on. A prelate entered, marched up to him, took his hat off, and asked him if he had one like it. The marquis examined it, handed it back, and with a sweetness which was silken, replied: "No; and if I had I'll be shot if I'd wear it." The clergyman wanted to assist at a table-d'hôte and could not. Through a tailor's defection he had no trousers to wear.

He said he was not a bit more particular than other people, but he had noticed that a clergyman going in to dinner without trousers was almost sure to excite remark. Fashion is not, therefore, a purely feminine vice. There you have at least two men who were slaves to it.

At the risk of writing ourselves down as something else, we should like to call ourselves a third. For, though our ignorance of fashion is abysmal, our admiration is without bounds. Apart from the pleasures of pure mathematics, we know of nothing more intoxicating. Behind its history is the history of love. Whoever invented the one invented the other. In days when tattooing was apparel it has been authoritatively surmised that woman's attractiveness was so meagre that she was as incapable of detaining men as animals are of detaining each other. There were herds, not homes. The development of the wardrobe was the development of the affections. The heart of man began to beat when woman ceased to resemble him. But it was not until meditation had made her modest and fashion fastidious that his enthrallment was complete. Then at once where the boor had been the knight appeared. In place of the female came the woman. Hitherto she had served. Thereafter she began to

reign. In the States to-day she rules the roost. Fashion has done it. Hence our admiration for that active abstraction. Hence, too, the serenity of spirit which a well-dressed woman displays.

That serenity is quite natural. Barring such abominations as golf skirts and blouses, smart women have never got themselves up more fascinatingly than they do to-day. In the old prints of earlier days they are astounding to behold. Frocks were masonry and chignons architecture. Caricaturists represent *les très grandes dames* followed by carpenters widening and heightening the doors through which they pass. In one sketch a hairdresser is shown on a ladder arranging topmost curls. On the head of the Duchesse de Chartres a *coiffeur* succeeded in exhibiting her entire biography. The hair of the Princess de Machin was manipulated into a cage, in which were loosed three thousand butterflies.

After the amputations of the Revolution fashion must have become simpler, but through epochs which we lack the art to describe it remained unalluring until Worth took a hand. The women he turned out looked like angels, only, of course, much better dressed. To-day the girls to whom Doucet has ministered are

a caress to the eye. Personally, if we may refer to ourselves, there are frocks of Félix that have seemed to us more satisfactory than old masters, and there are also confections of Paquin that we have found as exhilarating as cups of champagne.

In what manner they are evolved and through what process, after their evolution, these rue-delapaixian seductions, primarily and, it may be, uniquely designed to pleasure some Princesse Lointaine, repeat themselves indefinitely, and variously vulgarised, reappear on the banks of the Neva, at the Golden Gate, in Bloomsbury and Bucharest, in Kandahar and Chicago, the Lord in his wisdom and mercy only knows, and in so saying it may be that we exaggerate, for, sure of nothing, we cannot be sure of that, although, indeed, there has just occurred to us an incident highly enlightening.

Some years ago the Queen of the Wends, Queen of the Goths, the Queen Matchmaker, who was the late Queen of Denmark, was also Queen of the Bicycle. In her obituaries the fact was not noted. Compared with her other titles it may have seemed unimportant. But it is only unimportant things that are really momentous. Louise of Hesse-Cassel became the

progenitrix of sovereigns, and left the course of events unaltered. She got on a wheel one day and changed the face of the earth.

The event occurred before the flood, a full decennium ago, at a time when no decent person would have been found dead on a bicycle. It was at her summer court on the Baltic, through the wide leisures of which the selectest princesses and the least exclusive princes lounged, that the deed was done. What the mother of an empress *in esse* and of another *in posse* does, smaller fry copy. The young royals, her grandchildren, followed suit. Photographed, bike in hand, their pictures emerged in shop windows. At sight of them Paris went mad. Then New York caught a fever, which afterward spread to London, and ultimately was reported to have assumed epidemic proportions in Melbourne. So runs the world away. Meanwhile, the queen had put her wheel aside. Imitation is flattery's most odious form. None the less, a fashion had been set, industries founded, manufactories multiplied, and all through a monarch's whim, because of a summer day an entirely amiable lady had seen fit to mount a wheel.

That wheel has since been relegated to the provinces. In its place is the auto. Presently

that will pass. Fancies vary, follies ditto. The one thing constant is change. Yet, as with the bike, so with bonnets. What great ladies do lesser ladies copy. Therein is the mode's *modus operandi*. These premises admitted, there arises the interesting problem, What shall the woman of the future wear? But, before deciding, it will be useful to determine what sort of a person that woman will be.

Could the subject be considered from the standpoint of Dr Schenck's promise that sex may be determined by maternal nutrition, it is obvious that woman would be scarce as Madeira and just as heady. But though Dr Schenck promised he did not fulfil. As a consequence, the subject becomes more complex. At the same time, women being all alike in this that they are every one of them different, it follows that what is true of them to-day was true in the past and will be in the future. Individually diverse, collectively they are undistinguishable. To the naked eye at least. And it was certainly to remedy this defect that Fashion was invented. For however fancies may vary and follies change, however distressing last year's hat may look, woman herself does not alter. It is the mode that passes, not the model. The eternal feminine

is everlastingly the same. To tell, then, what sort of a person the coming woman will be, take a receipt from astrology and first hatch her milliner.

Even so and even otherwise, though it is the mode that passes and not the model, though through the change of years and the convolution of things the heart of archaic Eve beats throughout femininity to-day, the beauty of the lady has developed. Yet, as nothing is constant but change, that beauty is doomed to diminish. In the part of the world from which we write it cannot help itself. Beauty's patent of nobility is to be useless. Therein is the sorcery of the rose. It charms and does nothing. Commerce, combinations, concentration, and all that in them is, whether utilitarian, progressive, or both, are beauty's antitheses. The trend of the age is, as we have elsewhere noted, to things very large and very ugly. In their construction, development, and expansion we all either actively or passively collaborate. We cannot do otherwise. The Zeitgeist will not let us. It has us fast in its maw. For the bewilderments of feminine witcheries it cares not a rap. That for which it does care is progress. In moulding us to its will it moulds our senses and muddles our souls. The

instincts it instils we will transmit. As a consequence the babies to come may develop both brains and brawn, yet never beauty. Now add the column up. The result is plain women.

And so much the better. Plain women are currently considered neglectable quantities. Such consideration comports an error that is profound. Memoirs and missions have acquainted us with many who dressed, undressed, and digressed divinely. The picture gallery of heroines is crammed with others who understood very well that, while beauty may allure, graciousness enchains. A service of Sèvres with nothing on it is less appetising than a *petite marmite*. Unaccompanied by other attributes, beauty alarms when it does not weary. Moreover, it is only the solely beautiful who are really plain. A really plain woman is one who, however beautiful, neglects to charm. By the same token a beautiful woman who contents herself with being merely beautiful is far plainer than a plain woman who does nothing but beautiful things. It is for this reason that the most beautiful woman in the world is always the woman whom we have yet to meet. It is for this reason, too, that in the Evangel of Women it is written, or rather will be when the Evangel

appears: Blessed are the plain who succeed in charming, for theirs and theirs only is the Kingdom of Love.

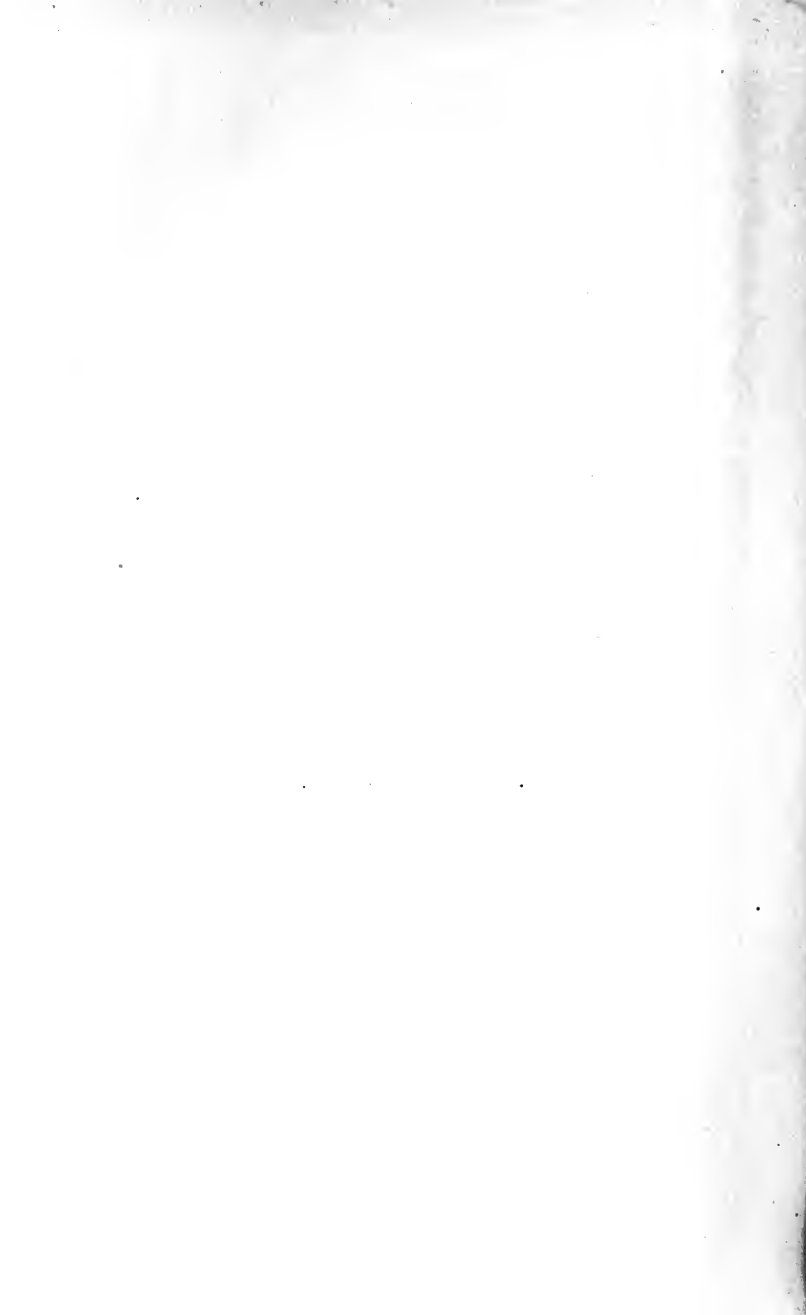
But let us consider the subject less seriously. Beauty is relative. Perfect beauty is a phrase and nothing else. Once upon a time a philosopher produced a large volume, in the course of which he proved that God is perfection. Then he produced a second volume, equally large, in which he proved that perfection does not exist. It were impossible to be more exhaustively witty. Subsequently another philosopher produced a supplementary work, in which he proved that in the absence of perfect beauty a lady who is equally ugly all over is more satisfactory than one unequally fair. It were impossible to be more profound. These views, however, public opinion has failed to endorse. But that is natural. Moreover, there is a disease of the eye that is catalogued as hemiopia. Of any given object the patient sees but half. It is one of Satan's greatest *tours de force* to have afflicted us all with that malady and rendered us blind to feminine defects. It must amuse him not a little to see how we are all taken in. Were it otherwise men would devote themselves to pious works. For that matter,

it is only those who have penetrated the guile of the Very Low that do. As a consequence, when, in the future, women are plain, men will occupy themselves only with virtuous deeds. And is not that a consummation devoutly to be wished?

Yet because the coming Eve is to be plain it by no means follows that she will be painful. On the contrary. In the good old days of the glory that was Greece, a woman whose peplon did not hang right in the back, whose general appearance was not modish, there and then, as we have somewhere remarked, became a disturber of the peace, and as such liable to a fine that varied with degrees of slatternliness from ten to a thousand drachmæ. Penalties not similar but cognate will, we assume with entire readiness, be visited by the legislators of the future on the woman who shall in her attire presume to neglect to charm. But we assume with equal readiness that such neglect will be rare. For while by that time hemiopia may have become curable and feminine defects be recognised and endured, it follows for that reason that women—*celles de la haute, bien entendu*—will be tricked out, adorned, and embellished, as were never even the goddesses of old.

How the ladies of the middle classes shall then appear interests us no more than how they appear to-day. We take it, however, that among them there will be some quite vulgar enough to be pretty. But about the plain yet peerless peris of the peerage of this and other lands there will be garments immaterial as moonbeams, gorgeous as quetzals, at once shadowy and stunning, luminous as the zaïmph of Tanit, coruscating as the shower of Danæ, the triumph of art, poetry, and the Rue de la Paix. For in default of feminine perfections such things as these must be, if only to perpetuate the species, and with it the jubilance and the guile of Satan and his pomps.





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